宗像教授伝奇考

【第二集】

むなかたきょうじゅでんきこう

星野之宣

Hoshino Yukinobu

潮漫画文庫

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【第二集】
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北海道大雪山系で
雪崩に巻き込まれた宗像教授。
九死の宗像の眼前に、どこからともなく、
ひとりの女性が現れた。
白雪姫、イザナミへとつながっていく
彼女との不思議な体験…。
〈白雪の伝説〉より

❖星野之宣❖

一九五四年一月二十九日、北海道帯広市に生まれる。愛知県立芸大中退。
一九七五年「鋼鉄のクイーン」でデビューし、同年「はるかなる朝」で手塚賞受賞。
以来、宇宙、海洋、伝奇、SF等、スケールの大きい本格派SF漫画家として活躍。
徹底した取材と科学的知識に基づく、卓抜なアイディア、壮大で緻密なストーリー、
繊細なペンタッチが多くの読者をひきつけている。
代表作に、「妖女伝説」「2001夜物語」「ヤマタイカ」「ブルーホール」
「未来の二つの顔」「メガクロス」「宗像教授伝奇考」など多数。

BOOK DESIGN❖TAKAHASHI JUNZI

既刊大好評発売中!!

❖星野之宣の本❖

◉希望コミックス
「宗像教授伝奇考」1〜6巻・特別版
◉潮漫画文庫
「ヤマタイカ」全5巻

THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

VOLUME 2

HOSHINO YUKINOBU

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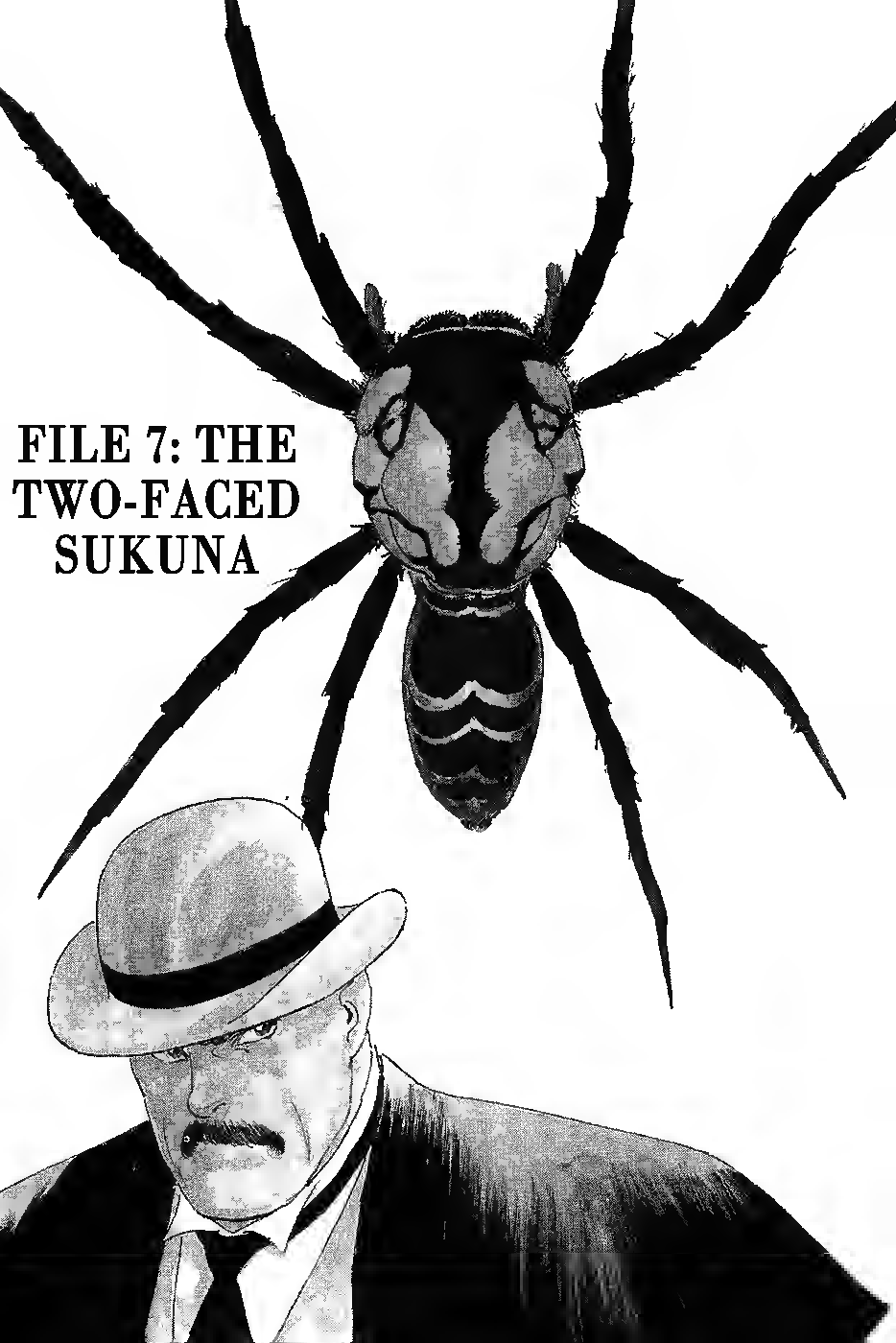
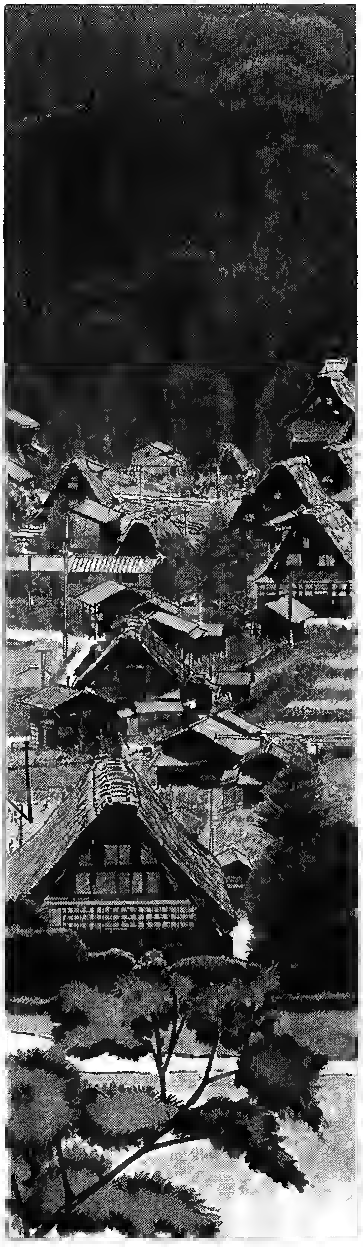
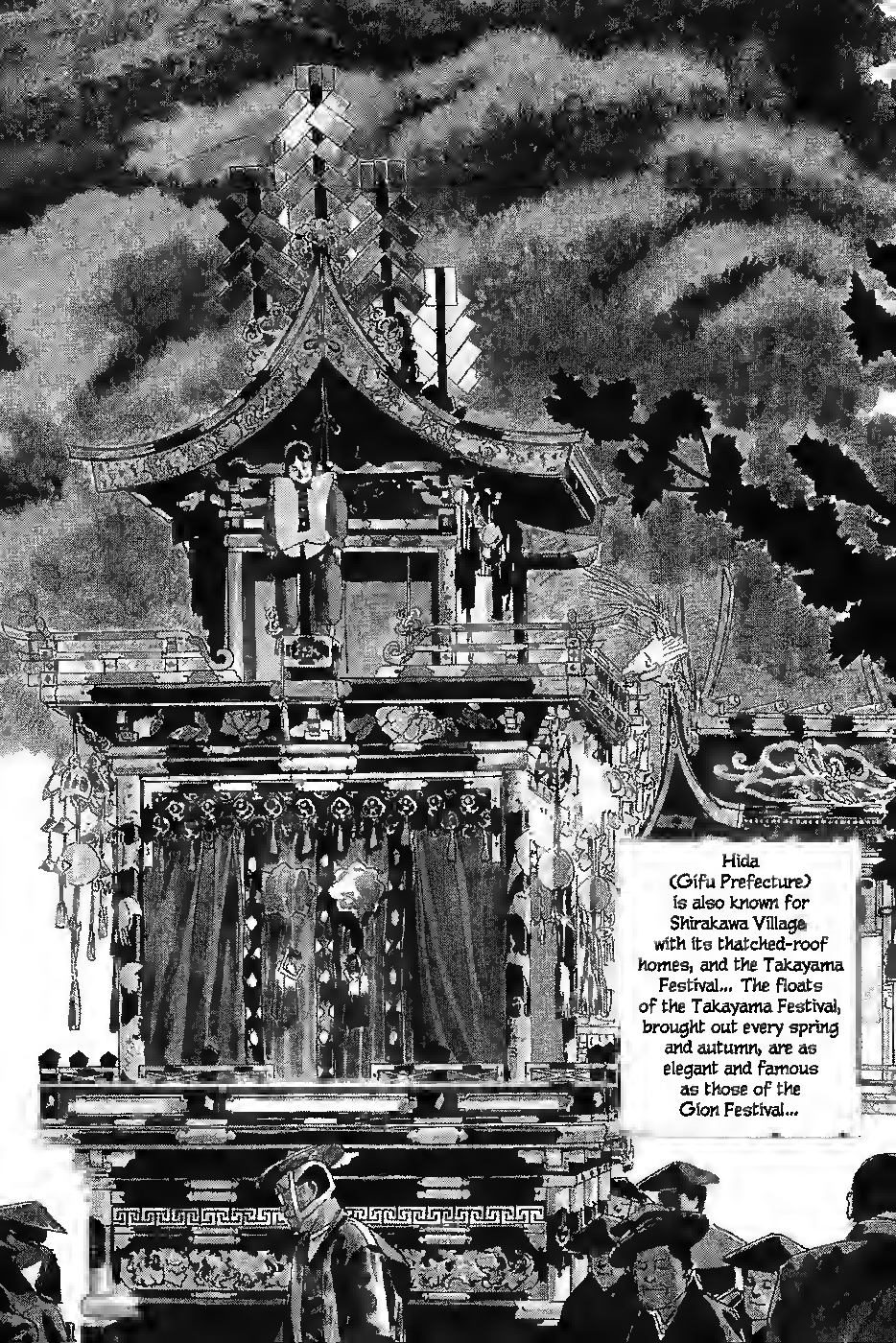
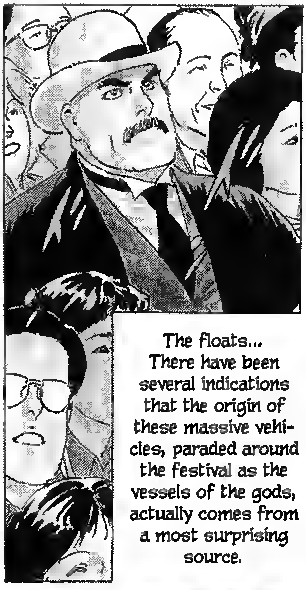

FILE 7: THE
TWO-FACED
SUKUNA



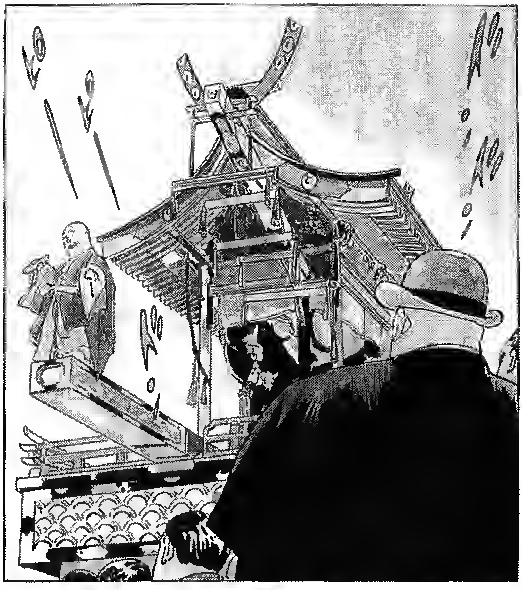
"In the province of Hida there was a man named Sukuna. That man had one body yet two faces, each with its own hands and feet... He kept a sword strapped to his right and left side, and brandished them along with a bow with his four hands. Thus he did not submit to the Emperor, and amused himself by plundering the people..."

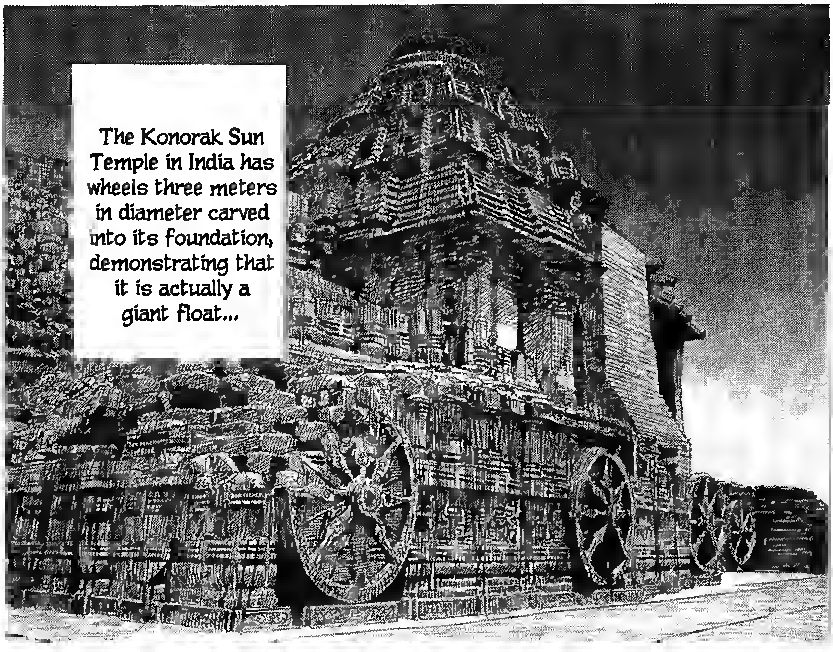
"Nihon Shoki", Year 66 of Emperor Nintoku's reign


Hida
(Gifu Prefecture)
is also known for
Shirakawa Village
with its thatched-roof
homes, and the Takayama
Festival... The floats
of the Takayama Festival,
brought out every spring
and autumn, are as
elegant and famous
as those of the
Gion Festival...



The floats... There have been several indications that the origin of these massive vehicles, paraded around the festival as the vessels of the gods, actually comes from a most surprising source.

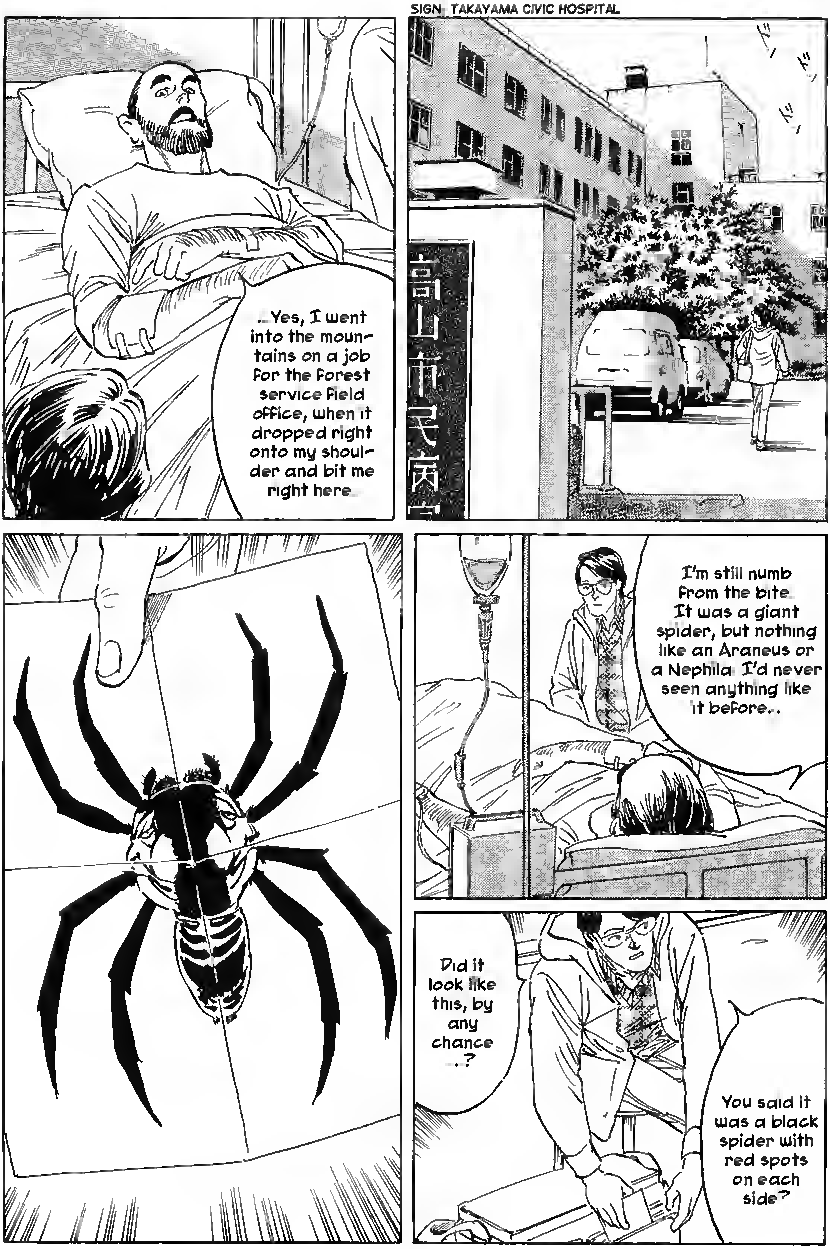


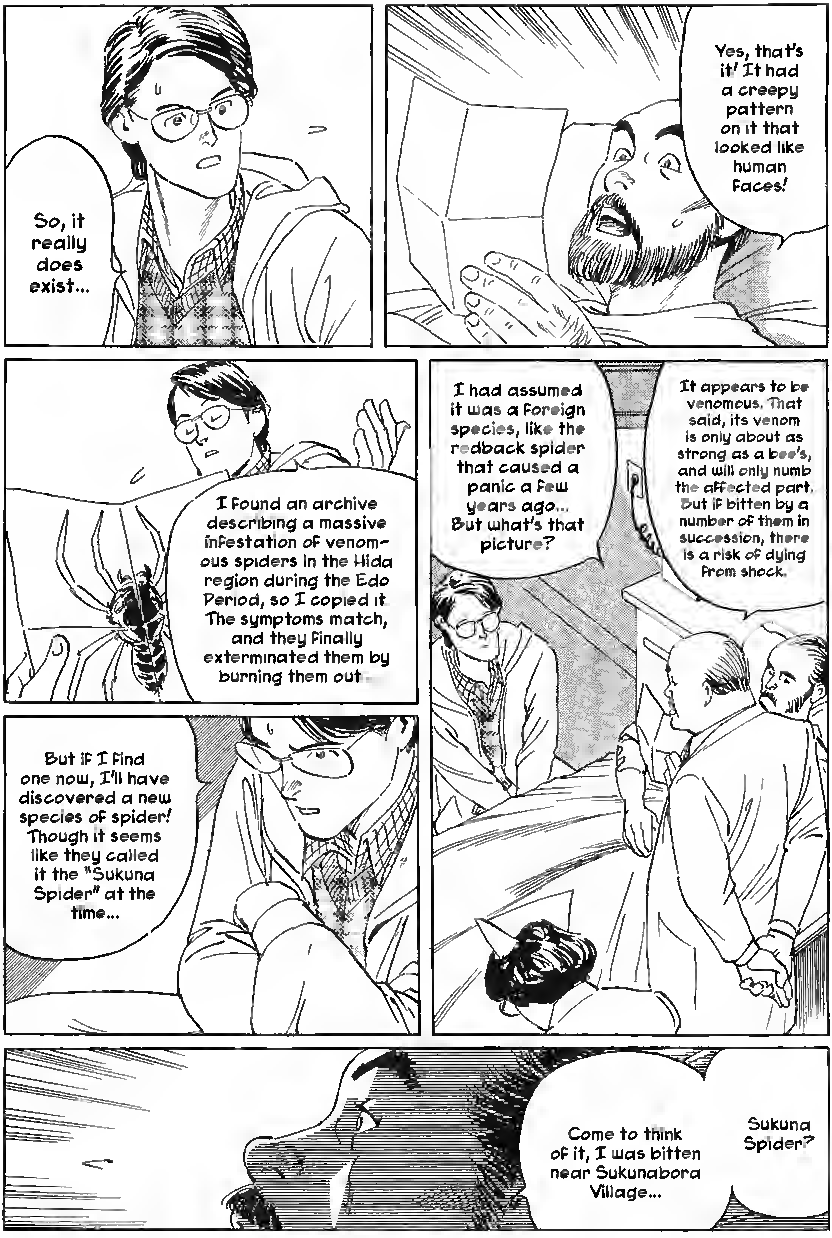

The Konorak Sun Temple in India has wheels three meters in diameter carved into its foundation, demonstrating that it is actually a giant float...

Even today in Nepal, floats are paraded around during the festivals of Hindu temples... Hinduism, India, Nepal, and Hida... What was it that tied all these together?

Are you okay? I was too distracted by the float...
It's alright, so was I...
Oh... I'm sorry!
Hey... You're not Orishiki Fumi, are you...?
Nawa!?
It's me! Nawa Akira! You know, from high school!
Huh?

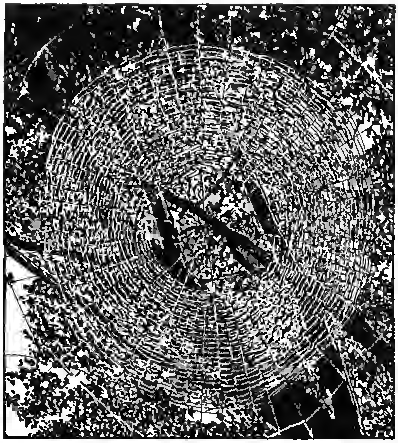
Oh yeah, I remember! You transferred here to Takayama from Gifu near the end of sophomor year!
Yeah... I guess I have.
Oh, you're working in a biology laboratory? An insect one, huh! You've always liked bugs, haven't you?
Oh, no! I'm sorry, but I'm meeting up with someone right now, and I'm running late!
Well... H-Hey, would you like to..
You remembered me, huh? I don't think I stood out all that much..
Meeting up with someone. I see...
:
I'm sorry! Hopefully I'll see you again..

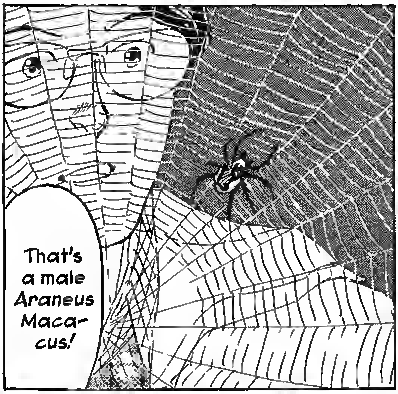

SIGN: TAKAYAMA CIVIC HOSPITAL
...Yes, I went into the mountains on a job for the Forest service field office, when it dropped right onto my shoulder and bit me right here.
I'm still numb from the bite. It was a giant spider, but nothing like an Araneus or a Nephila. I'd never seen anything like it before...
Did it look like this, by any chance...?
You said it was a black spider with red spots on each side?

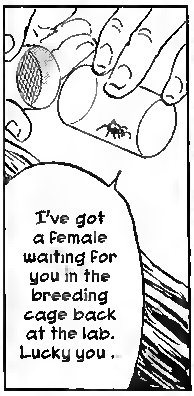

So, it really does exist...
Yes, that's it! It had a creepy pattern on it that looked like human faces!
I found an archive describing a massive infestation of venomous spiders in the Hida region during the Edo Period, so I copied it. The symptoms match, and they finally exterminated them by burning them out.
I had assumed it was a foreign species, like the redback spider that caused a panic a few years ago... But what's that picture?
It appears to be venomous. That said, its venom is only about as strong as a bee's, and will only numb the affected part. But if bitten by a number of them in succession, there is a risk of dying from shock.
But if I find one now, I'll have discovered a new species of spider! Though it seems like they called it the "Sukuna Spider" at the time...
Sukuna Spider?
Come to think of it, I was bitten near Sukunabora Village...

SUKUNABORA VILLAGE
OUTSKIRTS OF TAKAYAMA CITY,
GIFU PREFECTURE
Grandpa! I brought Professor Munakata!

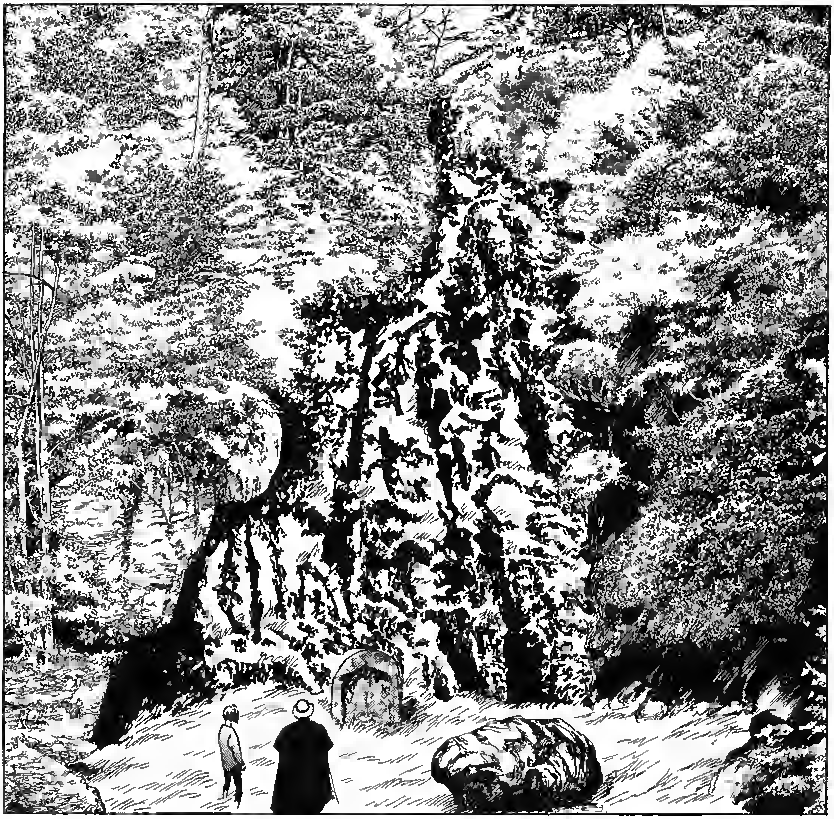
I happened to hear that there was a strange Dosojin here in the village. Would that be at Sukuna Grotto...?
It's named after a place called Sukuna Grotto in the mountain out back
Sukuna-bora Village... That's a rather odd name, isn't it?
I'm sorry to ask this of you, after having you come and pick me up the day of the Takayama Festival...
No it's fine. I have the day off work, anyway.
Thank you.
I can't walk like I used to anymore, so I'll have Fumi show you the way.
And I got to meet up with an old friend...

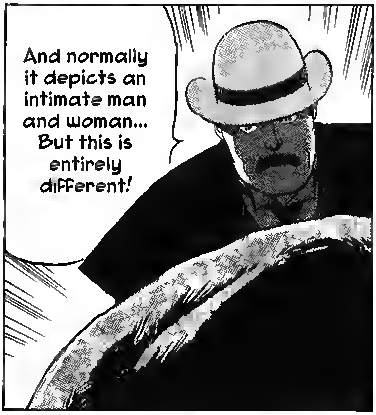


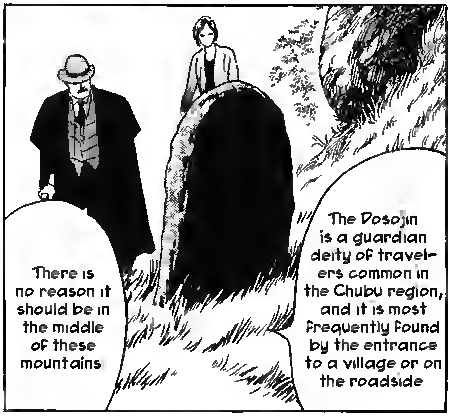

That's a male Araneus Macacus!


I've got a female waiting for you in the breeding cage back at the lab. Lucky you.

Hey, get back here!

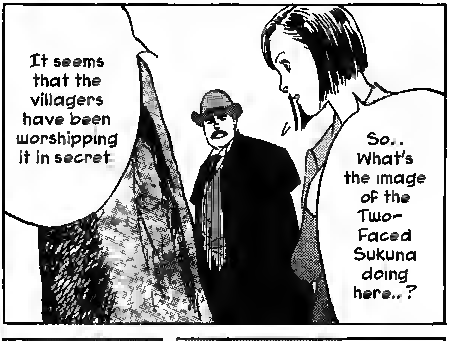


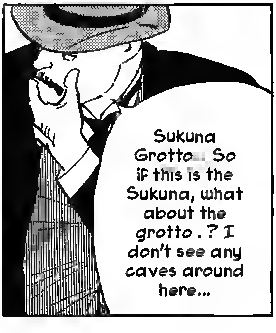

And normally it depicts an intimate man and woman... But this is entirely different!

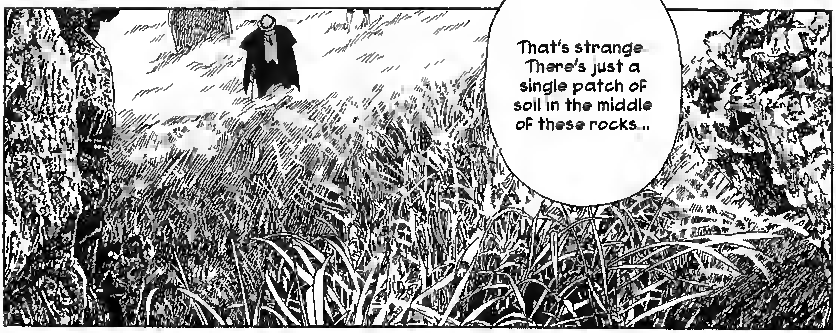

There is no reason it should be in the middle of these mountains
The Dosojin is a guardian deity of travelers common in the Chubu region, and it is most frequently found by the entrance to a village or on the roadside

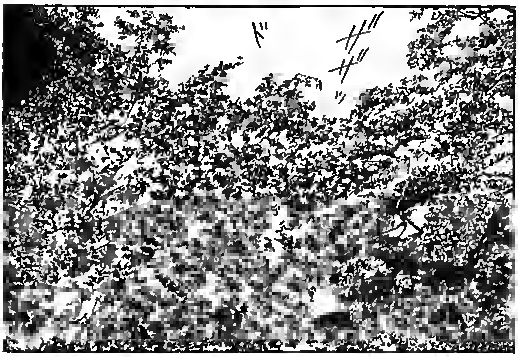
They are standing back to back, and appear to be unified...
This is the Two-Faced Sukuna!
Two-Faced Sukuna!?
I've heard about that. Wasn't that a monster that tormented the people of Hida, and had two faces and eight limbs?
Precisely.
The Nihon Shoki refers to it as simply "Sukuna", but because of its dual faces and limbs, it was called Two-Faced Sukuna.
It wielded swords and a bow in its two sets of arms, and the Imperial Court learned of its atrocities.

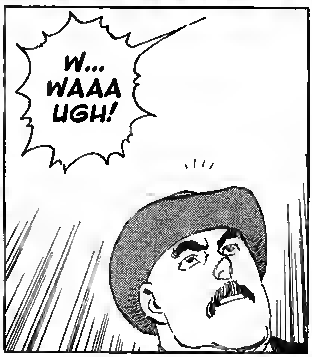
The current emperor Nintoku sent a warrior by the name of Naniwa-no-Nekotake Furukuma, who attacked it and eventually killed it.


It seems that the villagers have been worshipping it in secret.
So... What's the image of the Two-Faced Sukuna doing here...?


Sukuna Grotto... So if this is the Sukuna, what about the grotto...? I don't see any caves around here...


That's strange. There's just a single patch of soil in the middle of these rocks...

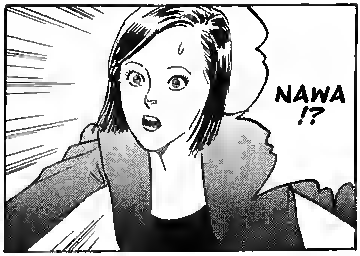


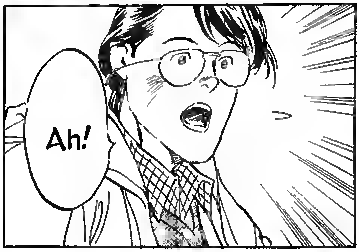

W... WAAA UGH!

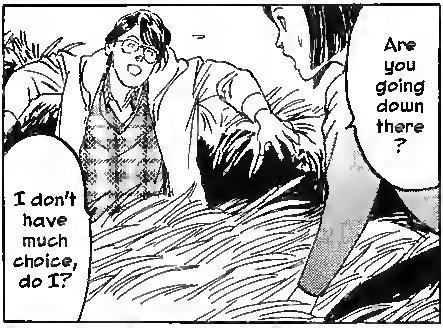
T...The ground just gave out beneath me...

WHO'S THERE? WHAT'S THE MATTER!?

I should be asking you...
W-What are you doing here?
I take it you've met.

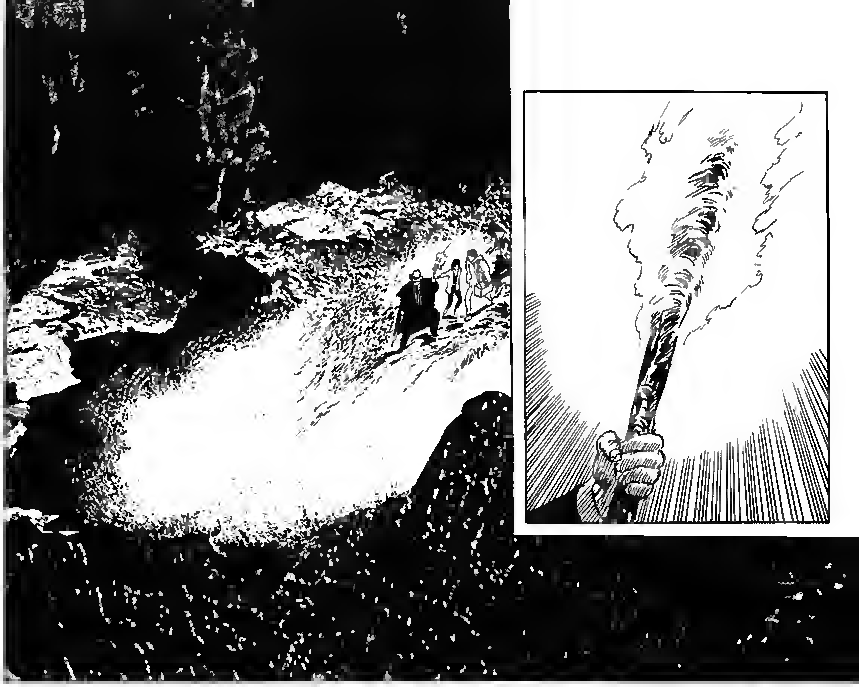

NAWA!?


Ah!

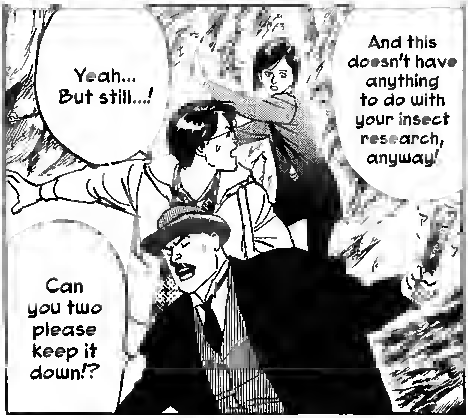

Are you going down there?
I don't have much choice, do I?

I knew it. This patch was artificially covered in soil.
My equipment..
ガバッ

Wait. I'm going down there, too.

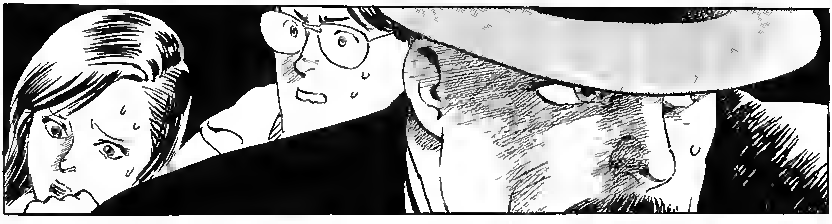


This is Sukuna Grotto...!


Yeah... But still...!
And this doesn't have anything to do with your insect research, anyway!
Can you two please keep it down!?

You could've stayed outside, you know.
Well, I don't like waiting on my own!

There are traces that the rock was cut away. This may have been a man-made tunnel.
AHHHH ...



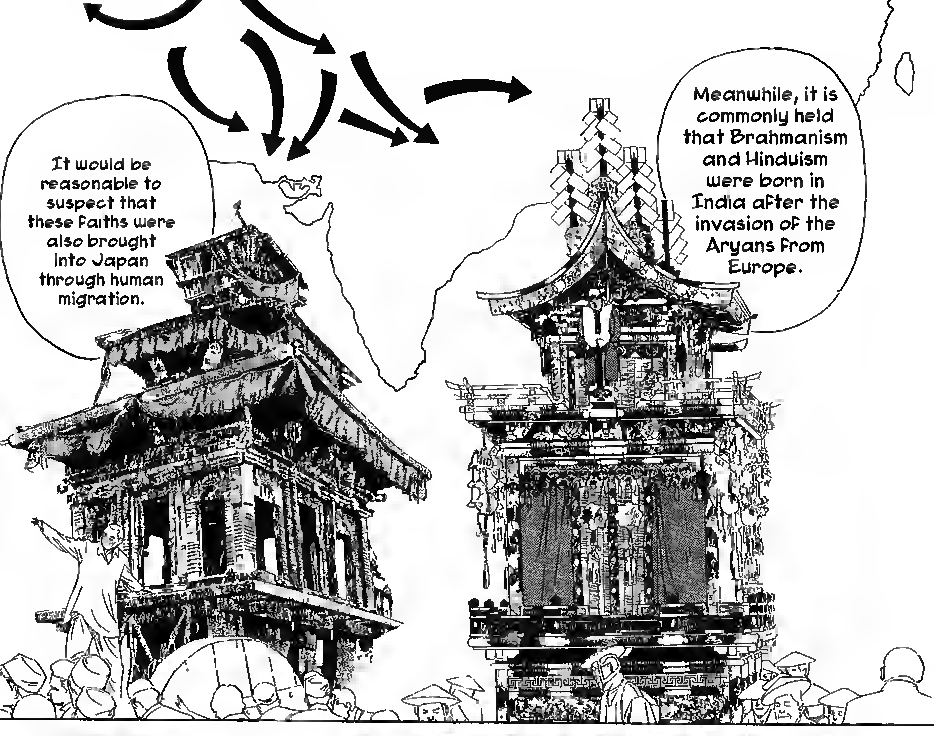
Uh!

These seem to be rather ancient. I wonder what happened...

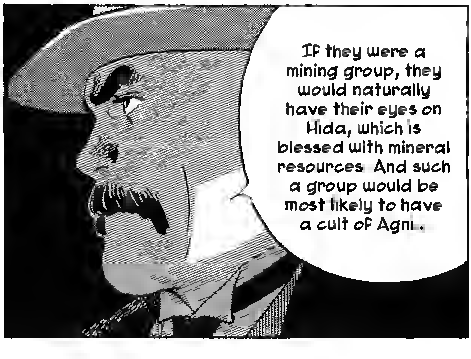
Yeah. Nobody knows him, but apparently he's really remarkable
Professor Munakata the Folklorist...?
They may be ancient, but they're still human bones. Try not to tread on them.
I know...

So this is the Two-Faced Sukuna...!
This must have been the Hindu god of Fire, Agni!
Dual faces and a red body...
This is Sanskrit. And there are traces that the entire wall and the statue were painted red...
I had my suspicions, and I guess they were true...!
Agni? Hindu!?

From India? So are those bones...?
There was only a cult of Agni in early Hinduism, and in its predecessor, Brahmanism.
Which can only mean that there was a people group that migrated from India to Japan at that time!
I have thought for quite some time that Hittite iron-age civilization was brought into Japan through the ancient Aryan migration.
And legends are only transmitted through the migration of people and culture. This is how legends such as the Swan Maiden and Snow White came to Japan...

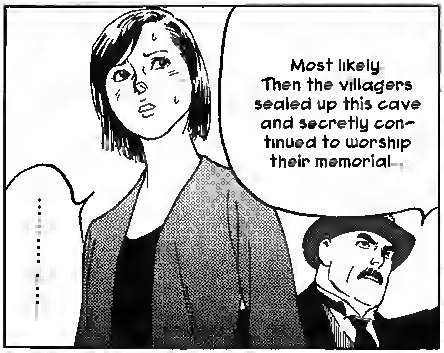

It would be reasonable to suspect that these faiths were also brought into Japan through human migration.
Meanwhile, it is commonly held that Brahmanism and Hinduism were born in India after the invasion of the Aryans from Europe.

There must have been an altar here, but it appears to have entirely carbonized.
Huh?


If they were a mining group, they would naturally have their eyes on Hida, which is blessed with mineral resources. And such a group would be most likely to have a cult of Agni.

These look like human bones, too, only they've been crushed...
So they were sacrifices to the god of Fire...!
Sacrifices were a constant part of Brahmanism. And if they captured the local Japanese and offered them as sacrifices...

That's it! Then they clashed with the original inhabitants ..!


Most likely Then the villagers sealed up this cave and secretly continued to worship their memorial..
.....

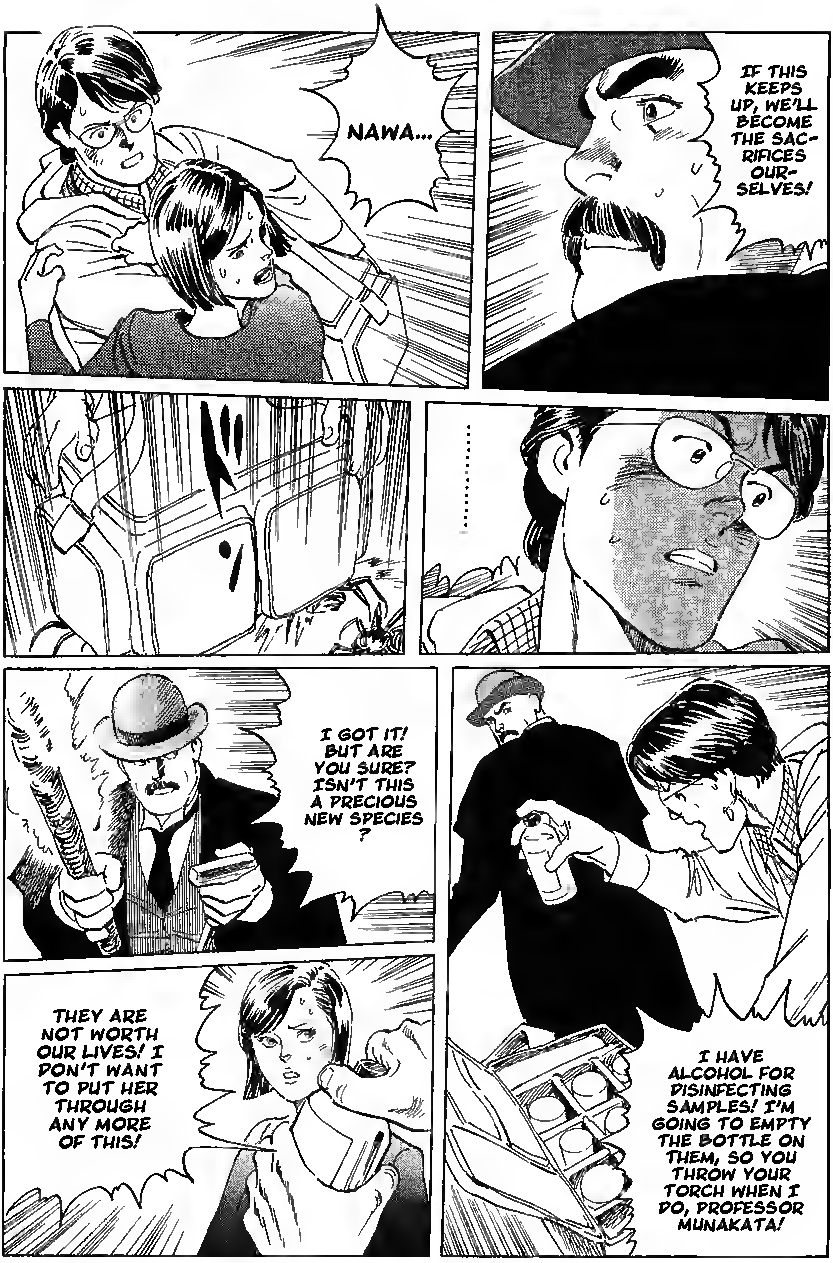
AIII
EEEE
EEEE
EEEE
EEEE
EEEE
!!

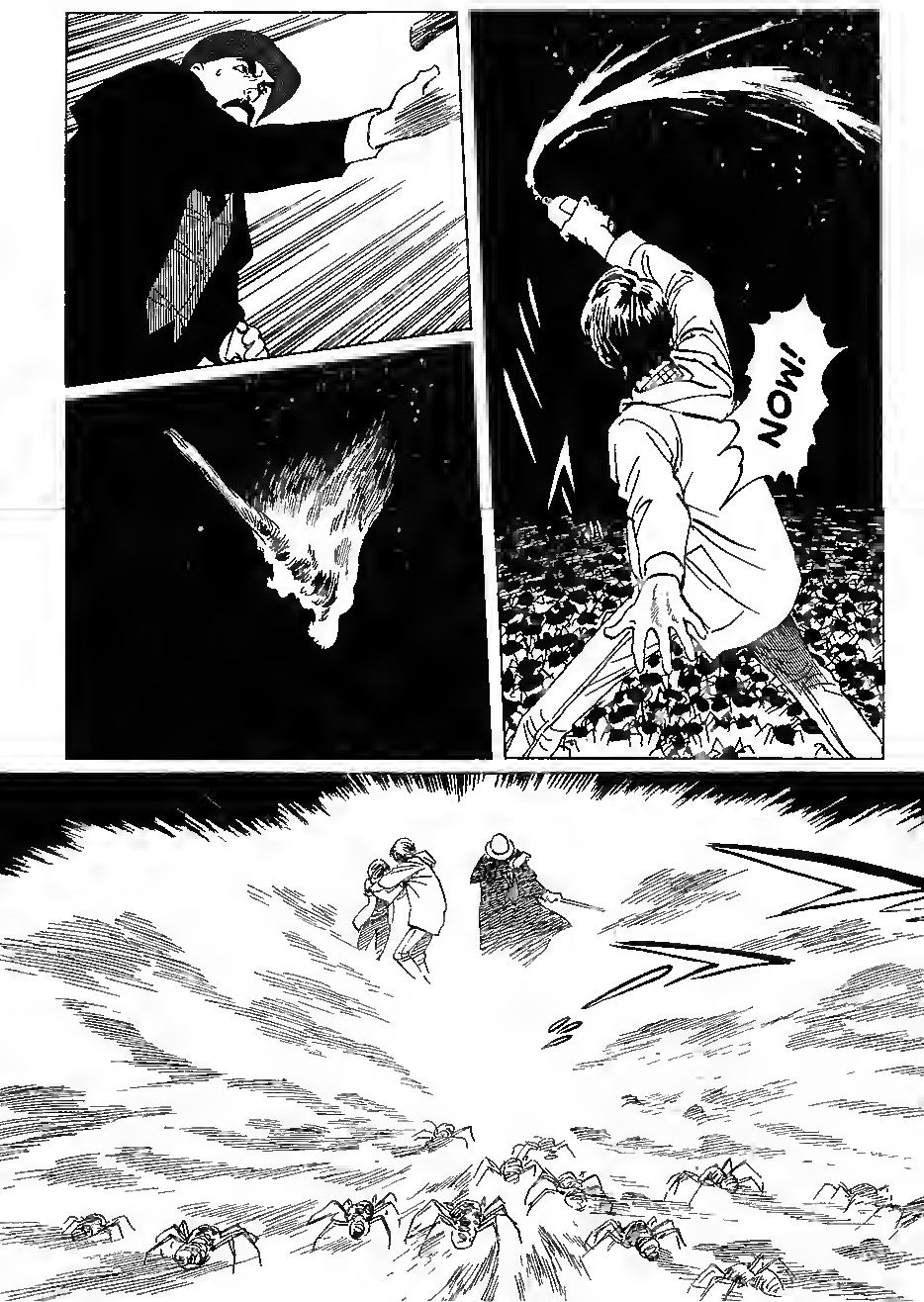
S...
SUKUNA
SPIDERS
!!

They're an unconFirmed species of venomous spider! I've been desperate to find a sample...
YOU MEAN YOU'RE RESEARCHING SPIDERS!? ICCCCKKKKKK!
Sukuna spiders !?
I see! They have a pattern that looks like two faces, and eight legs! Based on how you look at it, that's just like the Two-Faced Sukuna!
I'm sorry I didn't tell you because I thought it would creep you out
GET BACK!
YOU DON'T NEED TO HIDE YOUR RESEARCH ON SPIDERS! I'VE EXPLORED PLENTY OF CAVES IN MY LIFE, SO I'M USED TO SPIDERS AND CENTIPEDES AND THE LIKE!
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY LIKE THIS BEFORE...
ﾅﾅﾅ...

AIIIIIII
EEEEE
EEEEE
EEEEE
EEEEE
EEE!

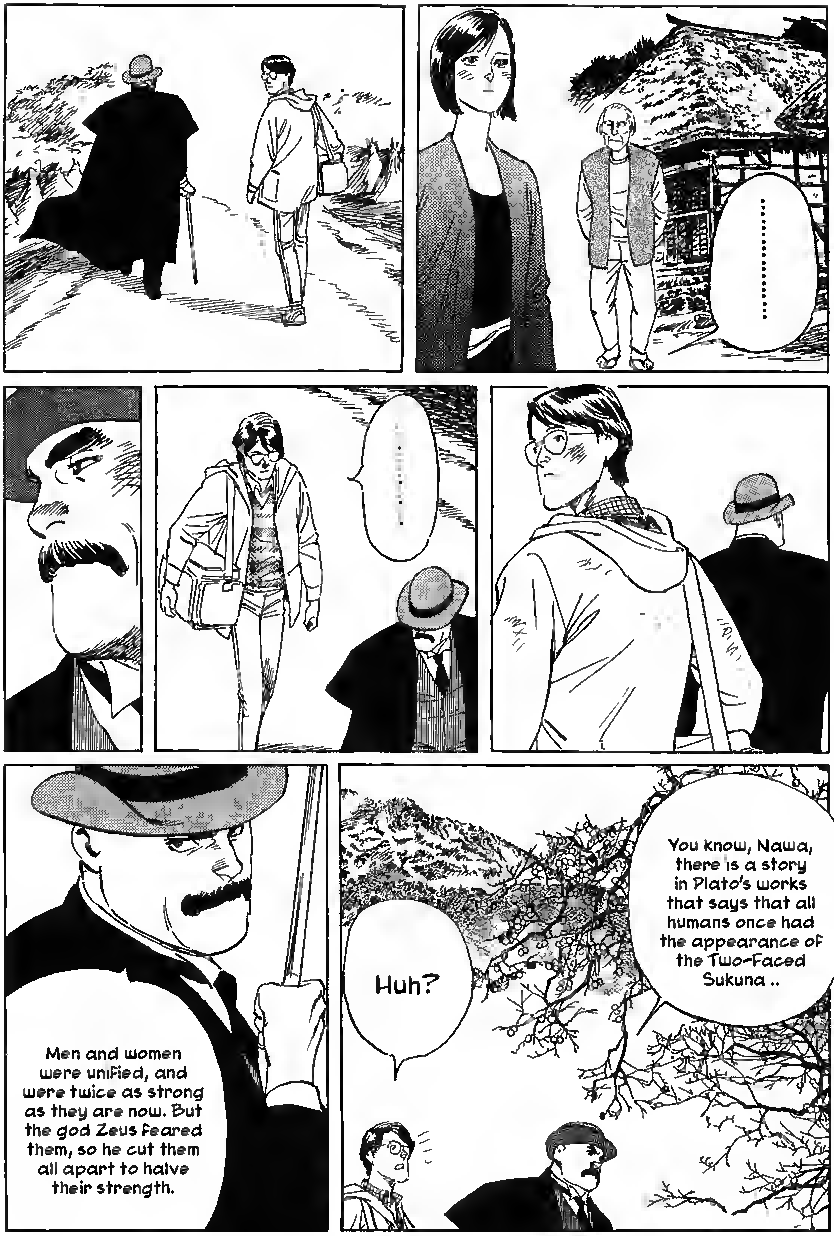
T...THEY JUST KEEP ON COMING. NO MATTER HOW MANY I DRIVE AWAY!
IF ONLY THERE WAS A WAY TO OPEN UP AN ESCAPE ROUTE...
THEY MUST HAVE SURVIVED IN THIS CAVE THROUGH CANNIBALISM, SO ONLY THE MOST FEROCIOUS ONES REMAIN!


NAWA...
IF THIS KEEPS UP, WE'LL BECOME THE SACRIFICES OURSELVES!
I GOT IT! BUT ARE YOU SURE? ISN'T THIS A PRECIOUS NEW SPECIES ?
I HAVE ALCOHOL FOR DISINFECTING SAMPLES! I'M GOING TO EMPTY THE BOTTLE ON THEM, SO YOU THROW YOUR TORCH WHEN I DO, PROFESSOR MUNAKATA!
THEY ARE NOT WORTH OUR LIVES! I DON'T WANT TO PUT HER THROUGH ANY MORE OF THIS!


NOW!

RUN
!!

In ancient Japan, the foreign people groups that did not submit to the Imperial Court were called Tsuchigumo.
Tsuchi-gumo?
They were said to have abnormally long arms and legs, and live in caves. There are tales in the Chronicles of them being trapped as they ran into their caves, and killed.
Miners in caves, Agni the god of Fire, and Tsuchigumo... These must have all coincided to compose the image of the Two-Faced Sukuna...

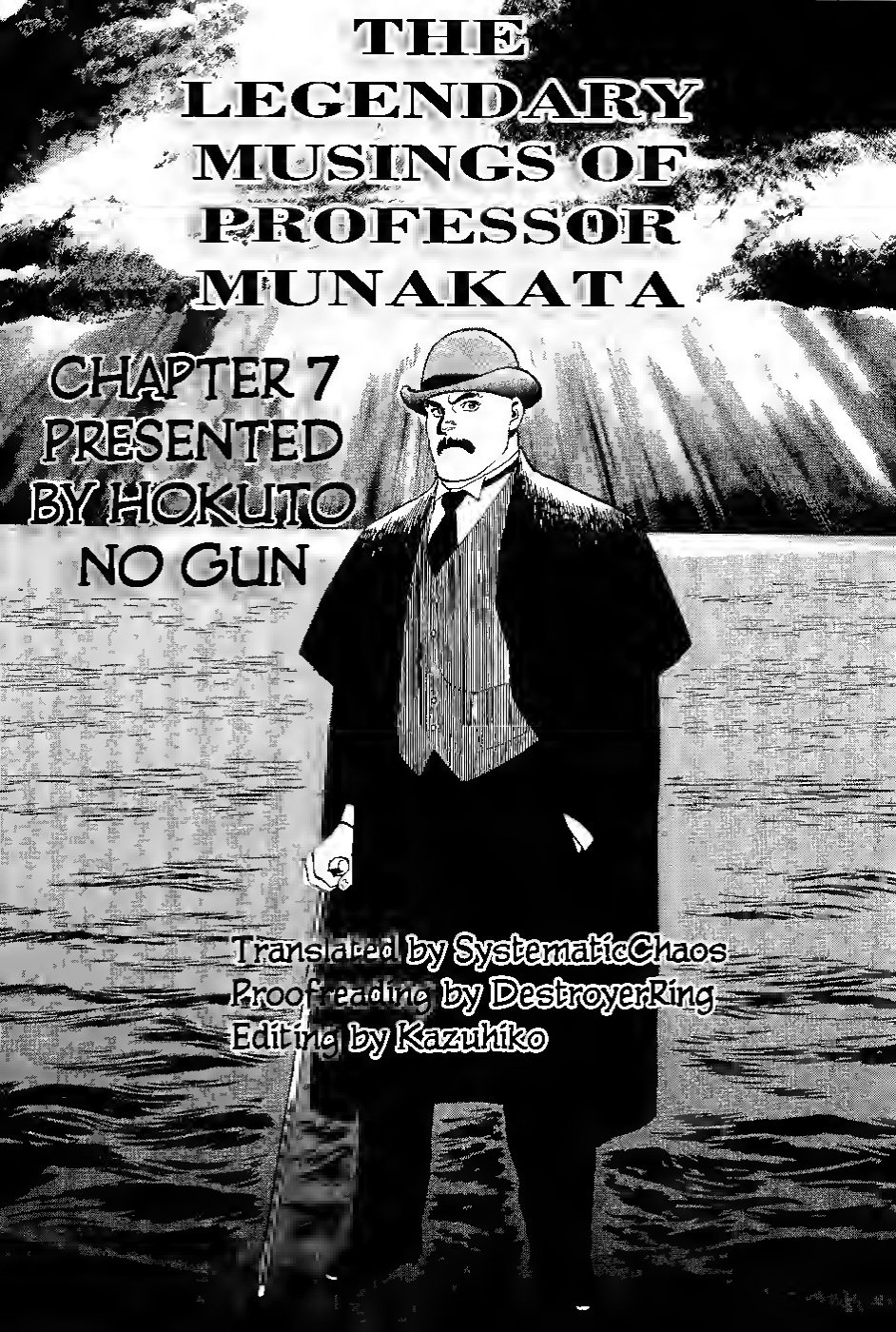

.....
.....
Men and women were unified, and were twice as strong as they are now. But the god Zeus feared them, so he cut them all apart to halve their strength.
Huh?
You know, Nawa, there is a story in Plato's works that says that all humans once had the appearance of the Two-Faced Sukuna ..

If you have anything to tell her, go tell her now. Live without any regrets
And men and women have roamed the land ever since, seeking their other half..

THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

CHAPTER 7

PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN



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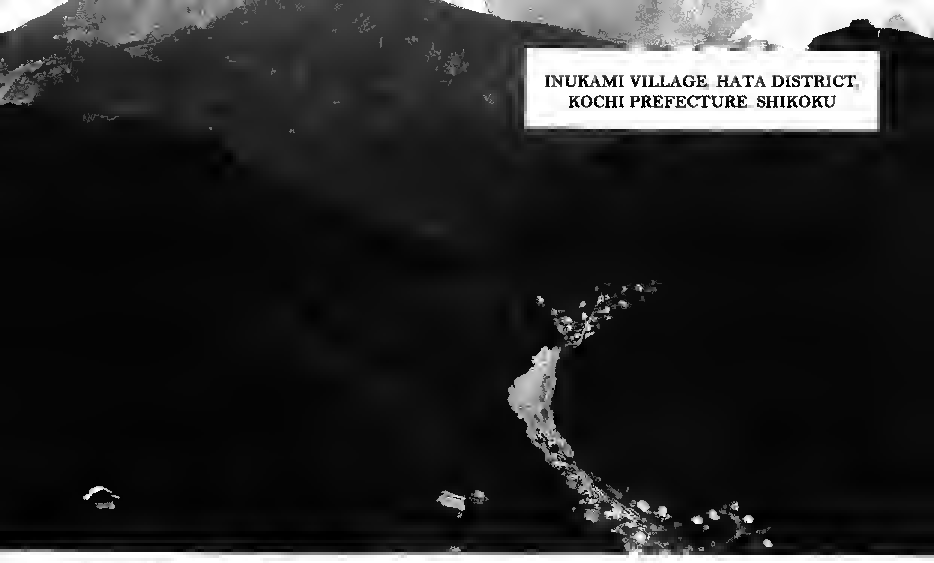
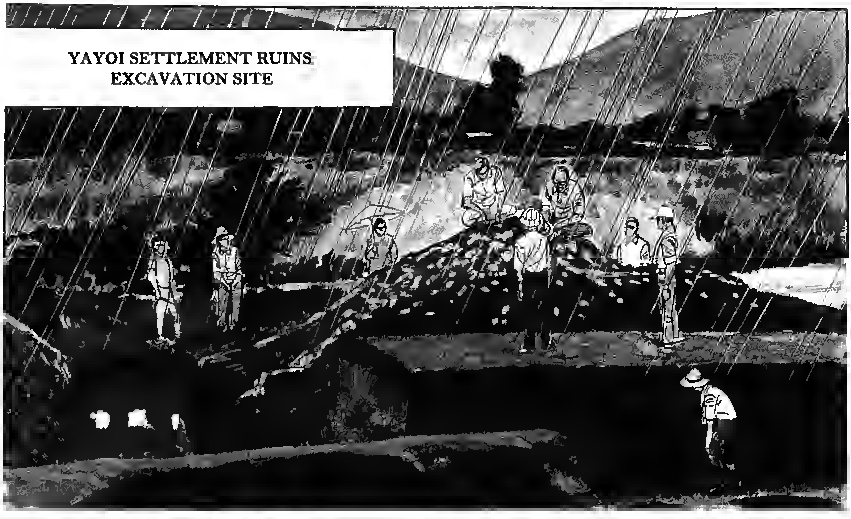
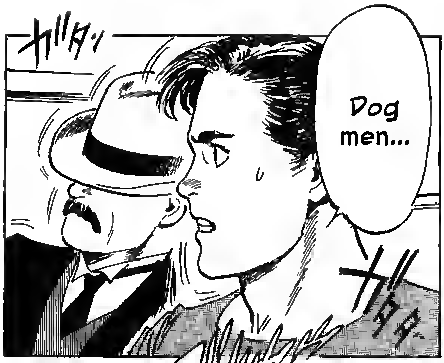
Proofreading by DestroyerRing
Editing by Kazuhiko



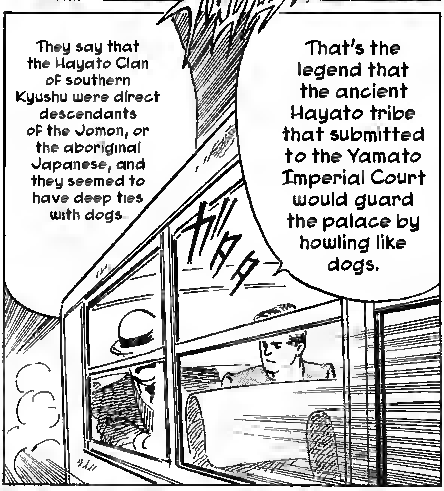


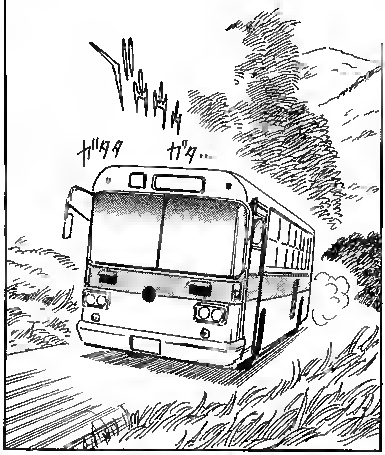
FILE 8: DOG BONES

FILE 8:
DOG
BONES



"'I have been in err. From this day forth, my descendants to the eightieth generation shall always serve as thy dog men...' ...And thus... To this day, the Hayato clan have not left the palace walls, and have served as howling dogs for generations." Nihon Shoki, the Age of the Gods.


They say that the Hayato Clan of southern Kyushu were direct descendants of the Jomon, or the aboriginal Japanese, and they seemed to have deep ties with dogs.
That's the legend that the ancient Hayato tribe that submitted to the Yamato Imperial Court would guard the palace by howling like dogs.



And Inukami Village is a rather amusing name, Kiba...
I thought that as sea-dwelling people, they would have crossed over and settled in Shikoku.

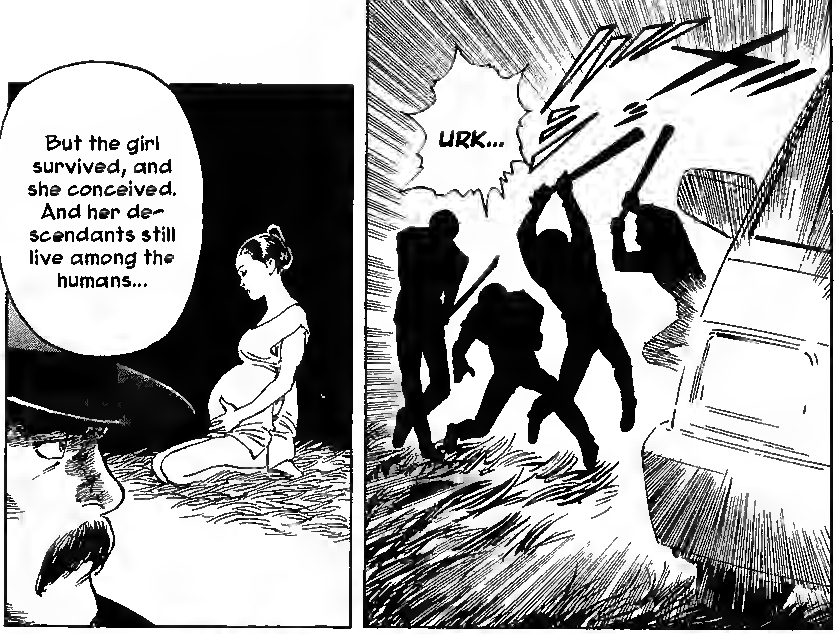
This is my first time being back to this village in two years since I left for university. I wouldn't have come back if you hadn't asked me, Professor Munakata...

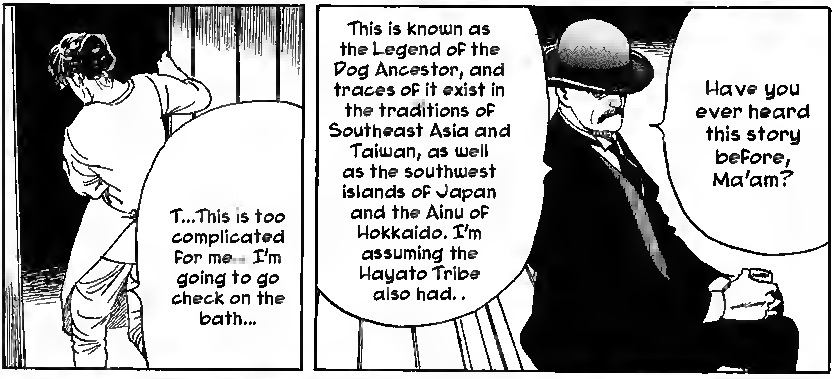
Inukami Village is split between the upper and lower village. My home is in the lower village...
Mother!
W... WHAT HAP-PENED TO YOUR LEG!?
Hiroshi...!
Oh, it's nothing. I just slipped.
Someone from the Upper Village did it!

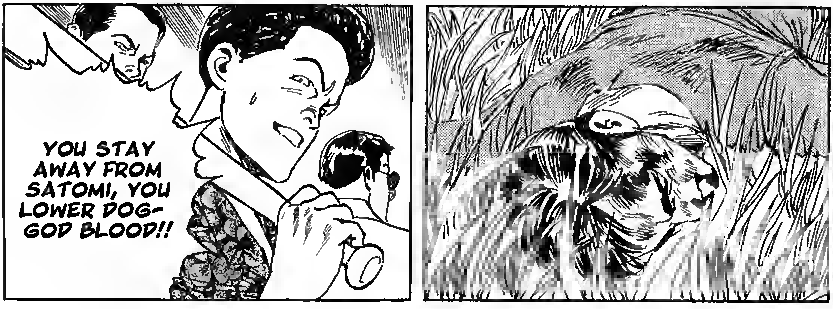
They made it so it would collapse easily, Hiroshi.
Sato...
Everyone looked the other way while Fusae was in pain, until I found her and called a doctor.
This is the only home left in the lower village. Everyone else has moved away.
I can't believe a professor at Hiroshi's university would stay here...

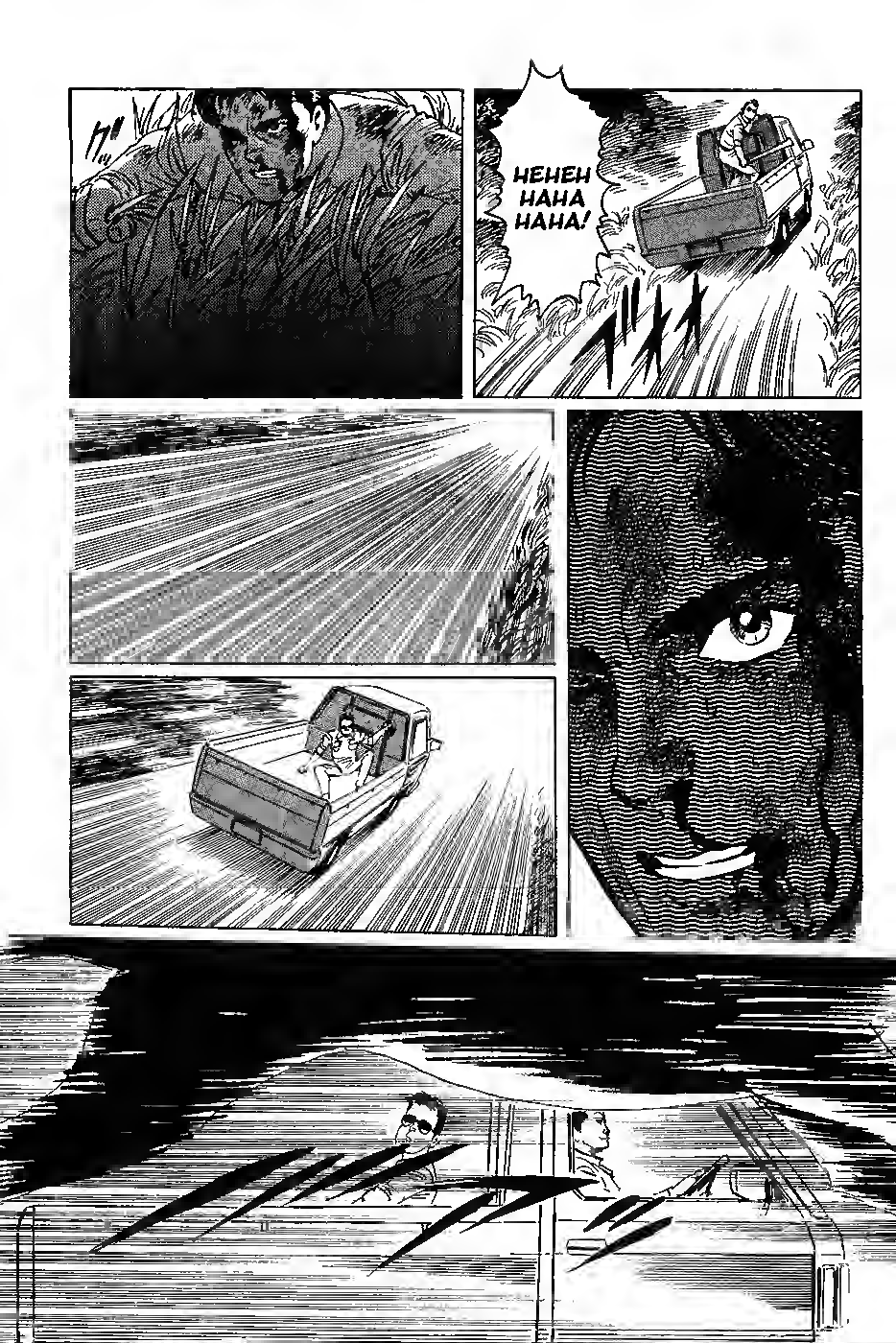
By the way, isn't Inukami Village...
the place they excavated a large sum of dog bones from a Yayoi ruin about a year ago?
Oh, it's nothing. I'm not all that prestigious of a professor, so pay me no mind, ma'am. Kiba was in my folkloristics class, and when I heard he was from around this area, I had him take me here.
But I hear all those bones had been taken away during the excavation...
There were twenty or thirty complete skeletons, which was a very rare find. And some of them had even been burnt.
SATO!

According to ancient folklore sources, there was a legend in this region...
Long ago, a tribe of dogs lived nearby a human village. One among them, a young dog that was larger than the rest, fell in love with a human girl and took her away from the village...
The humans were angered, and they carried torches and burned the dog tribe to death. The dogs all died out...
Long time no see, Hiroshi.


But the girl survived, and she conceived. And her descendants still live among the humans...
URK...


T...This is too complicated for me... I'm going to go check on the bath...
This is known as the Legend of the Dog Ancestor, and traces of it exist in the traditions of Southeast Asia and Taiwan, as well as the southwest islands of Japan and the Ainu of Hokkaido. I'm assuming the Hayato Tribe also had..
Have you ever heard this story before, Ma'am?


YOU STAY AWAY FROM SATOMI, YOU LOWER DOG-GOD BLOOD!!

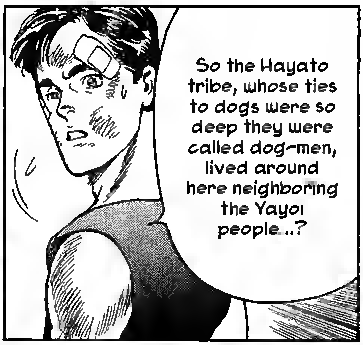

HEHEH
HAHA
HAHA!

EEK...
H... HEY, DID YOU SEE SOME-THING GO BY ...!?
WAAAA AAAAA AAUUU UUGG HHHH!

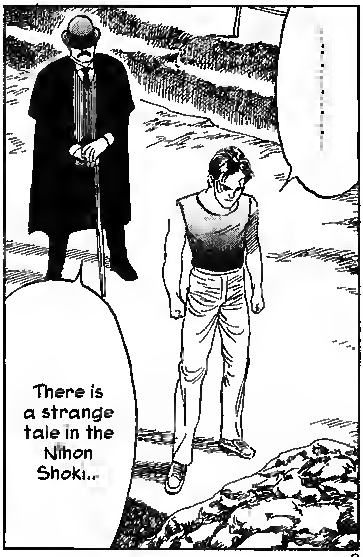
So, I take it you "just slipped", too. Good grief...
Shh...
All three of them have fractured legs .. And they're so frightened they won't speak...
Hmm?
Come to think of it, wasn't Fusae in the lower village injured in the leg, too .?

Footprints? They don't look human. But look how big they are...
These look like the Yayoi ruins. I was in Tokyo when it happened, so I don't know anything about the excavation...
The Jomon people cherished their dogs. They would give their dogs a burial if they died, and there are even cases of dogs buried alongside humans.
But the Yayoi people's ruins only have broken bones scattered all over the place. It's believed that they killed dogs and ate them.
So, somebody long ago killed those dogs, and somebody today hid the bones...
That reminds me of a funny story, of how the Jomon people and Yayoi people would treat dogs entirely differently.

In the thirteenth year of Emperor Yuryaku's reign, there was a thief in the province of Harima named Ayashi-no-Omaro. Because of his endless lawlessness, the Emperor sent a man named Ono-no-Omi Oki and his soldiers to burn down his home with torches.
But then, suddenly, a white dog the size of a horse jumped out from amidst the flames. When Oki cut it with his sword, the white dog appeared to change into Ayashi-no-Omaro...


So the Hayato tribe, whose ties to dogs were so deep they were called dog-men, lived around here neighboring the Yayoi people...?

I would not be surprised if they had a tribal clash. The fate of the dogs may well have been the fate of the Hayato clan...


There is a strange tale in the Nihon Shoki...

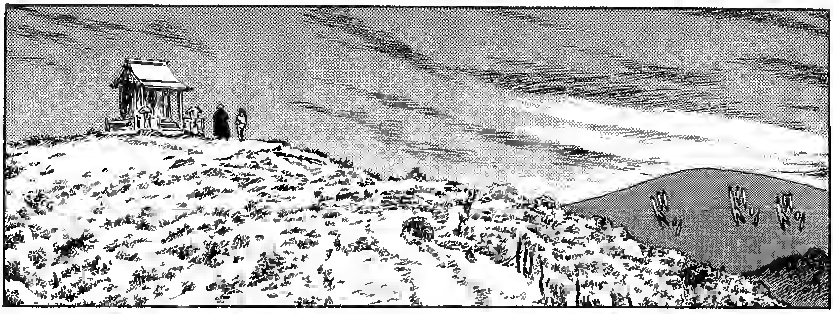
Here's a photograph of a dog bone that they excavated. The original may be lost, but this bone was different from all the rest.
Heh-heh...
That almost sounds like the European legend of the werewolf. A dog as big as a horse, huh...
Do you see it? It looks like the hind-leg bone of a dog, but it's three times the size of a normal one!
Forty million years ago, there was a prehistoric predator that lived in Mongolia called the "Dire Wolf", which was over five meters long. If you were to do a reconstruction based on that bone, you would get a monster like that!

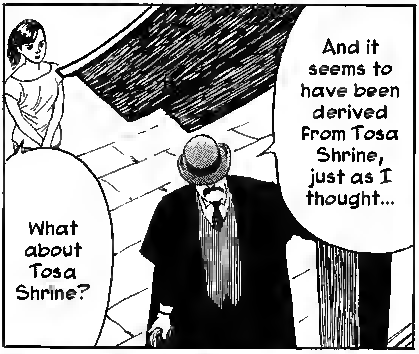
Now this is just my imagination, but the Hayato tribe known as the dog-men may have had an abnormally large dog, aside from ordinary dogs, that was the object of their worship, and the source of their seemingly magic power...
Head-man...!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, HIROSHI!? I TOLD YOU, YOU BRING THIS VILLAGE NOTHING BUT TROUBLE!
Hmpf!
He's here on my request. I have heard there was a "Torch-Bearing" Festival in this village tonight, and I was hoping I could see it.

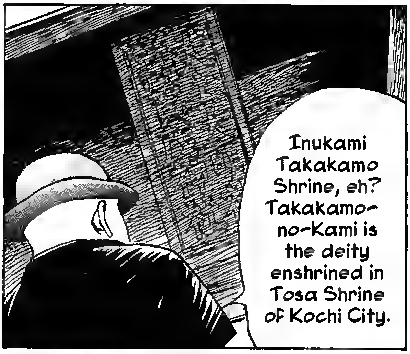
SA-TOMI!
I'm so sorry, Hiroshi! It was my father that treated you so cruelly last night! My father paid them all off!
Dog-god blood...? I see. In other words, fox-possessed and dog-god possessed lineages. I'd heard that such discrimination still goes on in the mountains and Shikoku...
A DOG-GOD BLOOD FROM THE LOWER VILLAGE SEEING A GIRL FROM THE UPPER VILLAGE IS OUT OF THE QUESTION! DO YOU MEAN TO TAINT MY HOUSEHOLD WITH YOUR DOG-GOD BLOOD!?
ARE YOU NOT SATISFIED WITH OSTRACIZING AND DRIVING OUT THE PEOPLE OF THE LOWER VILLAGE!? WHY WOULD YOU BE SO CRUEL!?
What!?
THE DOG-GOD BLOODS OF THE LOWER VILLAGE ARE NOT POSSESSED! THEY ARE NOT EVEN HUMAN! THEY HAVE DOG BLOOD IN THEIR VEINS!

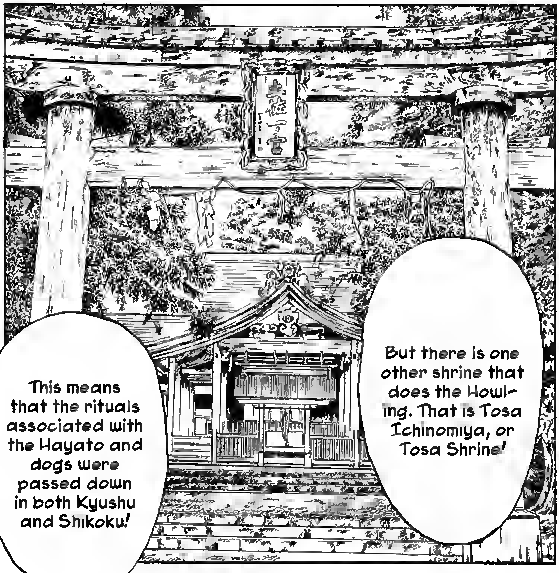
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! I'VE HAD IT UP TO HERE WITH YOUR ABSURD TALES! MY MOTHER MAY HAVE PUT UP WITH IT, BUT I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!
I MEAN IT! I HATE THIS PLACE!
HUH ...!?
FATHER, IF YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO DRIVE HIROSHI OUT, THEN I'M LEAVING THE VILLAGE! I'M GOING WITH HIM!
T... THIS IS UNACCEP-TABLE, SATOMI! ABSO-LUTELY UNACCEP-TABLE!!
LET'S GO!

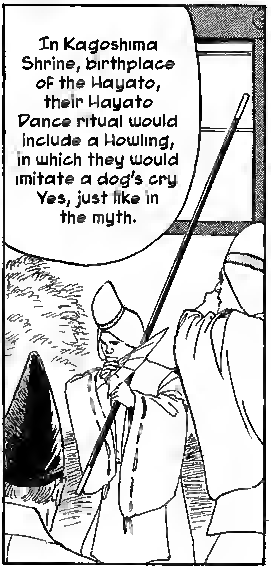
I'll stay in the village and fight! I'm not giving in to those bigots!
I'm not going back to Tokyo! I can't leave my mother on her own!
I'm going to talk to my mother. You show the Professor to Inukami Shrine. That's where the torch-bearing procession ends.
Hiroshi !?

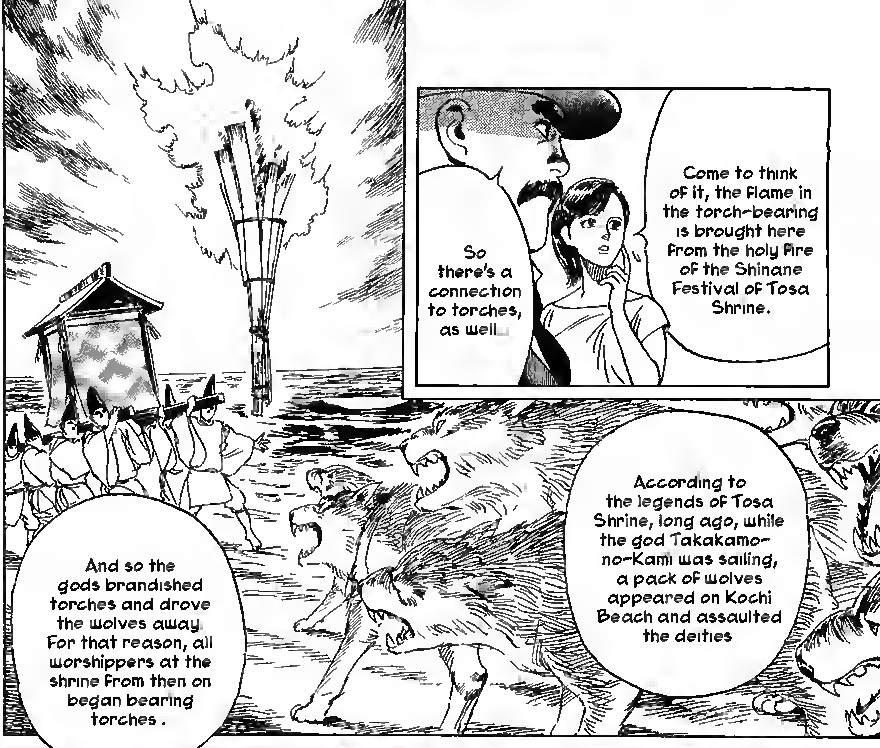


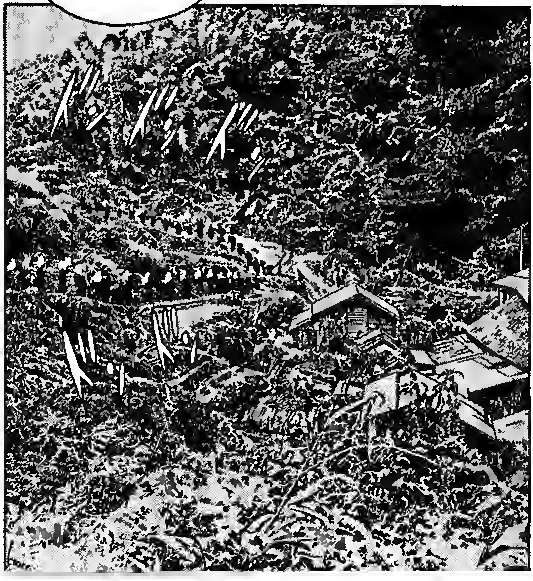

What about Tosa Shrine?
And it seems to have been derived from Tosa Shrine, just as I thought...

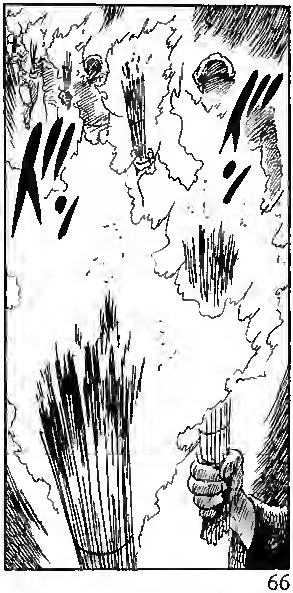

Inukami Takakamo Shrine, eh? Takakamo-no-Kami is the deity enshrined in Tosa Shrine of Kochi City.


This means that the rituals associated with the Hayato and dogs were passed down in both Kyushu and Shikoku!
But there is one other shrine that does the Howling. That is Tosa Ichinomiya, or Tosa Shrine!

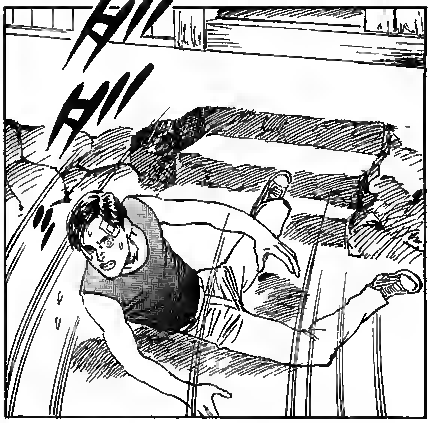

In Kagoshima Shrine, birthplace of the Hayato, their Hayato Dance ritual would include a Howling, in which they would imitate a dog's cry. Yes, just like in the myth.

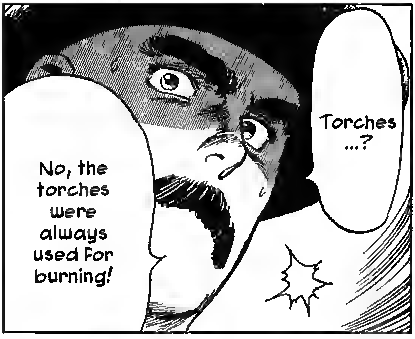

Come to think of it, the flame in the torch-bearing is brought here from the holy fire of the Shinane Festival of Tosa Shrine.
So there's a connection to torches, as well...
According to the legends of Tosa Shrine, long ago, while the god Takakamo-no-Kami was sailing, a pack of wolves appeared on Kochi Beach and assaulted the deities
And so the gods brandished torches and drove the wolves away. For that reason, all worshippers at the shrine from then on began bearing torches.

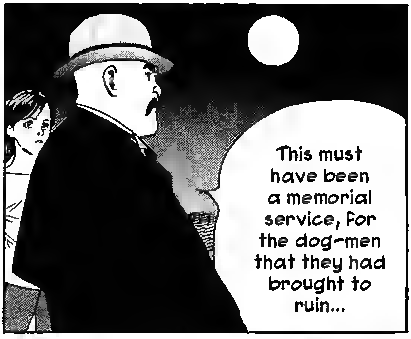


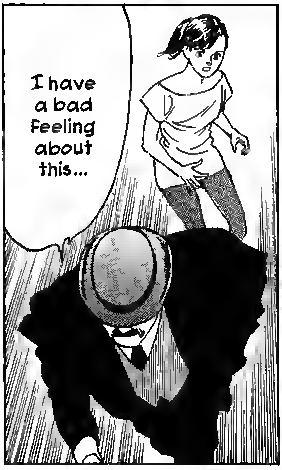


Mother..
!!
They are your ancestors


Kill
Kill


Torches ...?
No, the torches were always used for burning!


This must have been a memorial service, for the dog-men that they had brought to ruin...


I have a bad feeling about this...

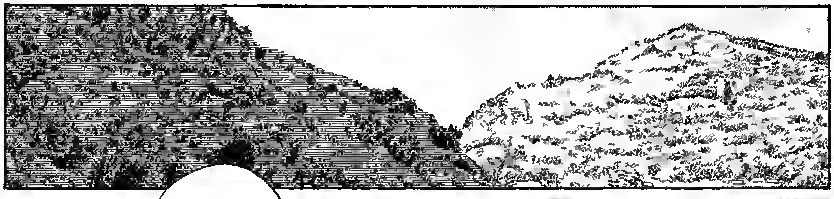
OUT OF MY WAY! CAN'T YOU TELL THERE'S A FIRE DOWN THERE!?
IT'S THE LOWER VILLAGE !!

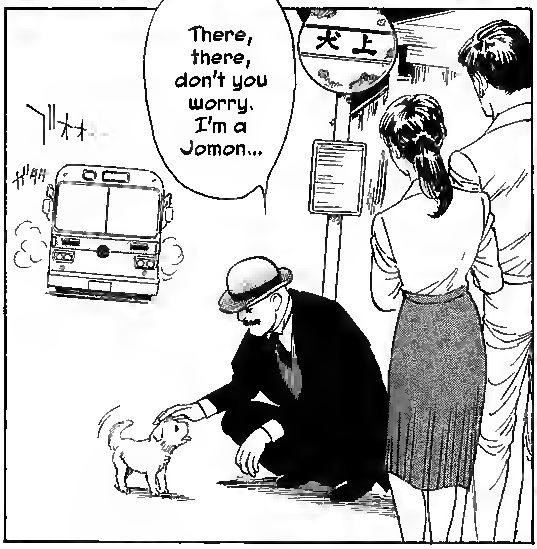
MOTHER... MOTHER!!
HIRO-SHI!
KIBA! NO!

HIRO-
SHI!!
WOOF!
WOOF!

WHINE!
The Dog God ....!!

M... MO- THER ...!

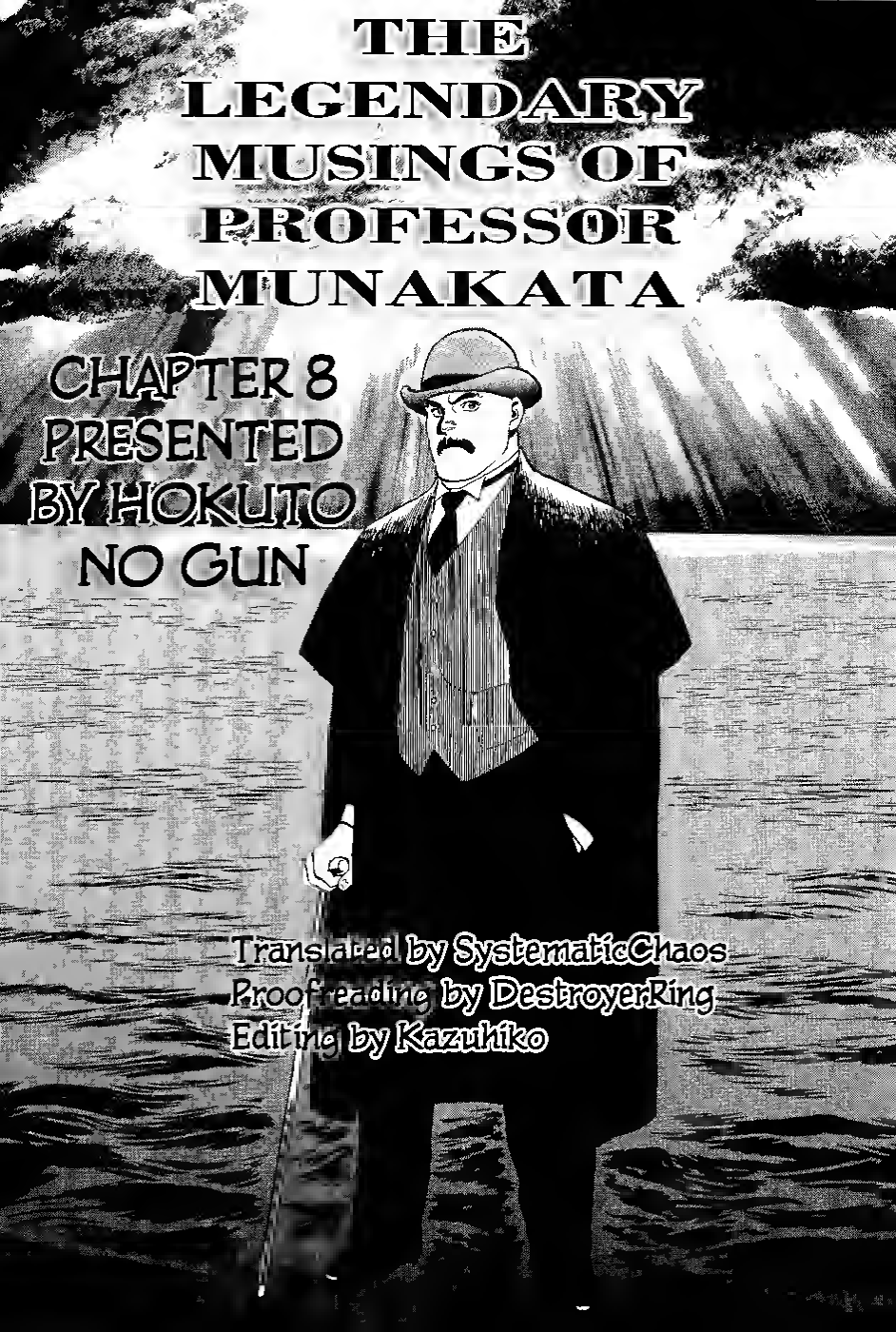



There, there, don't you worry. I'm a Jomon...
犬上

THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

CHAPTER 8

PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN



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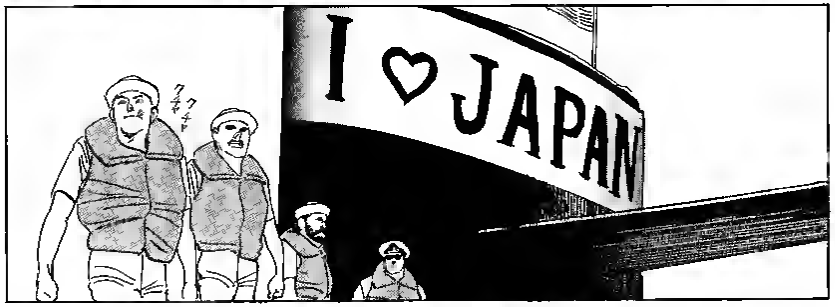
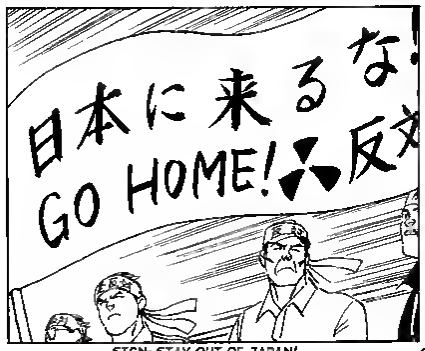
Proofreading by DestroyerRing
Editing by Kazuhiko

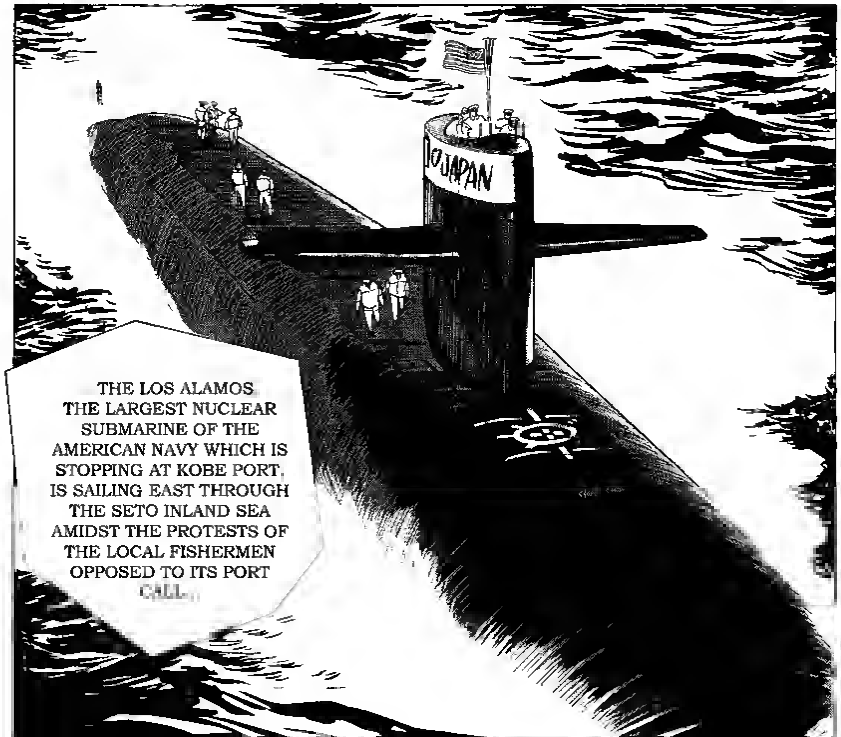
FILE 9:
REVENGE
OF THE
IRON MAN

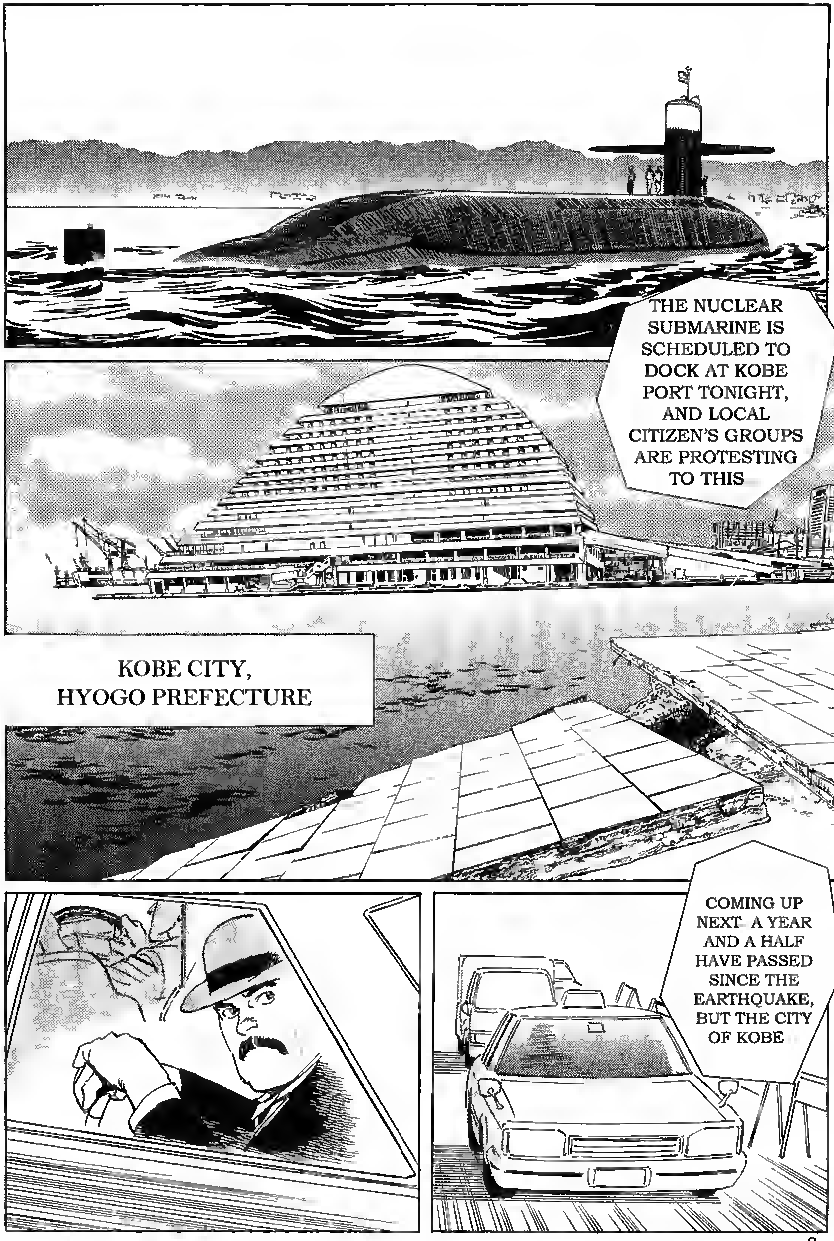


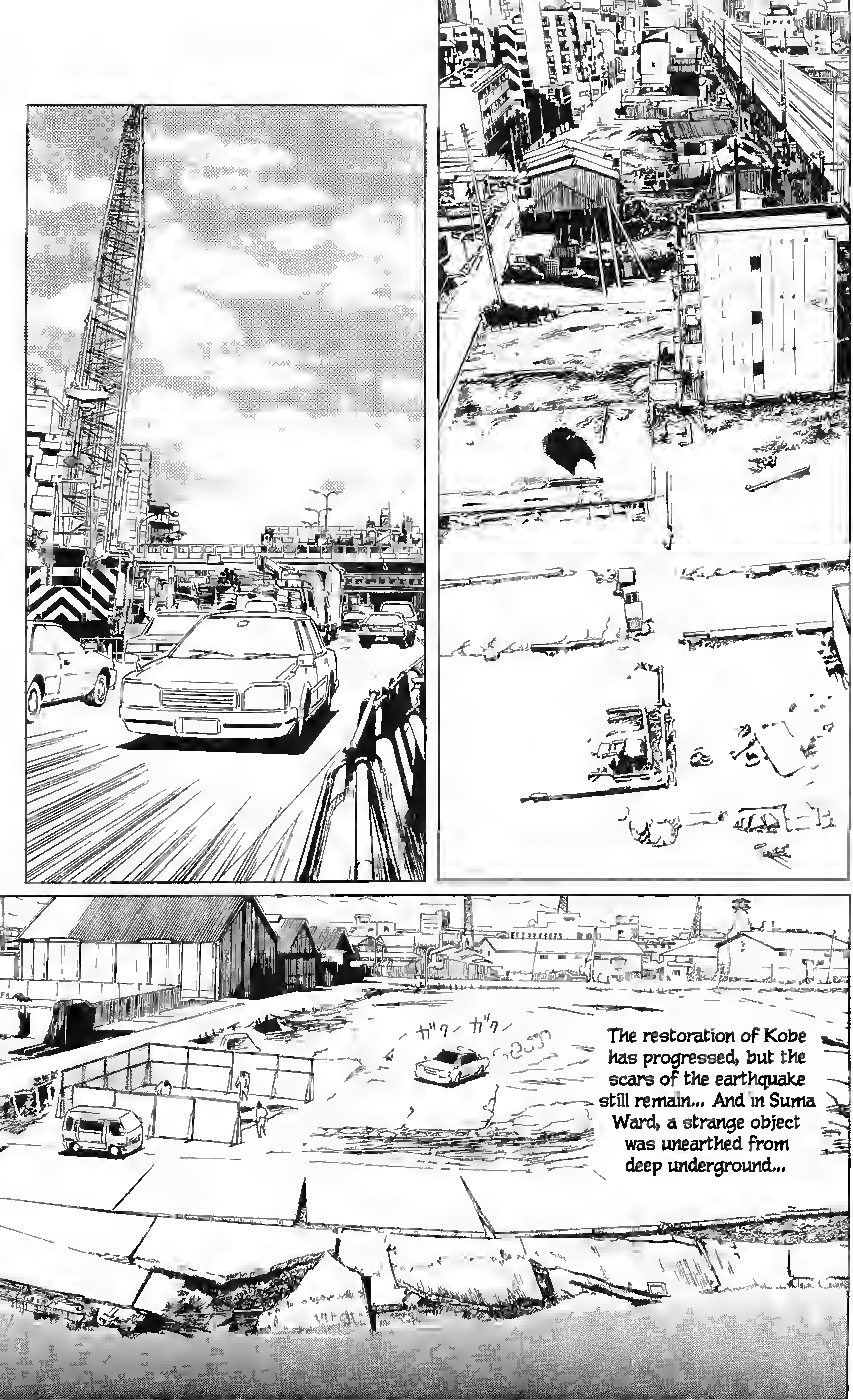


SIGN: STAY OUT OF JAPAN!

SIGN: DON'T TAINT THE SETO INLAND SEA WITH RADIATION!!


JAPAN
THE LOS ALAMOS, THE LARGEST NUCLEAR SUBMARINE OF THE AMERICAN NAVY WHICH IS STOPPING AT KOBE PORT, IS SAILING EAST THROUGH THE SETO INLAND SEA AMIDST THE PROTESTS OF THE LOCAL FISHERMEN OPPOSED TO ITS PORT CALL.


THE NUCLEAR SUBMARINE IS SCHEDULED TO DOCK AT KOBE PORT TONIGHT, AND LOCAL CITIZEN'S GROUPS ARE PROTESTING TO THIS
KOBE CITY, HYOGO PREFECTURE
COMING UP NEXT A YEAR AND A HALF HAVE PASSED SINCE THE EARTHQUAKE, BUT THE CITY OF KOBE


ガタン ガタン
The restoration of Kobe has progressed, but the scars of the earthquake still remain... And in Suma Ward, a strange object was unearthed from deep underground...

That's an incredible find! Is it copper? ...Or iron?
Is he a friend of yours, Yuge? I told him that no unauthorized personnel were allowed, but he wouldn't listen to me.
Pro-fessor Muna-kata!
It's an iron head. It weighs close to a ton. And it's barely rusted at all, considering how close to the ocean it was buried. Come with me for a second...
Shhhh! They're instructions from Professor Reizen from my university! No one can go against him!
Why do you need to keep it a secret !?
What are you doing here, Professor Munakata? I know this is my fault for letting it slip out on the phone, but you can't come here so brazenly... Even the press was shut out from this discovery!
Professor Reizen of Rokko University... He's an influential don in archeological circles... Hmpf!

According to the Chinese document "Shuyiji", there was what appeared to be bronze and iron skull excavated in Jizhou, and this was said to be a bone of the "Chiyou".
Still, this looks almost like a demon... And it's clearly not Japanese in style.
It was said to be a monster with horns on its head, and a body of copper-bearing iron, that ate iron and stone. Some sources say it symbolizes the tribe that produced the first iron weapons.
The Chiyou is a legendary monster from ancient China, and was most famous for doing battle with the Yellow Emperor on the fields of Zhuolu.
By the way, are you aware that Japan has its own legend of the "Iron Man"?
That's a sharp observation.

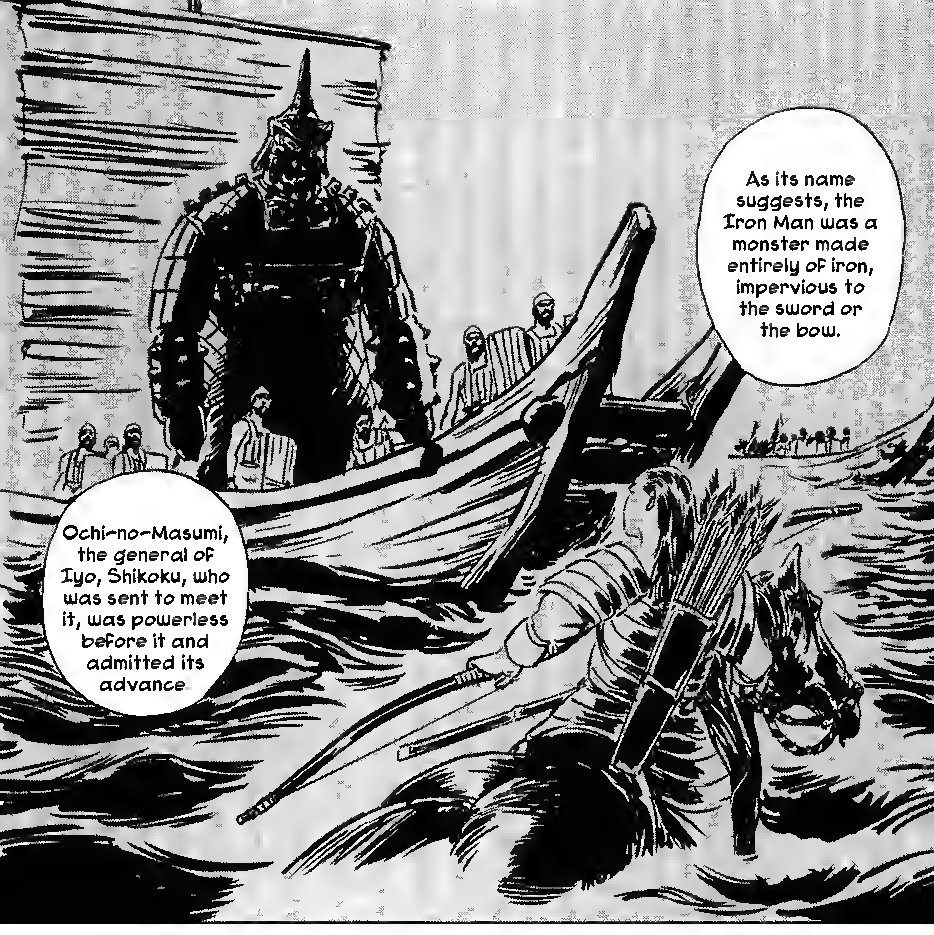
I'm originally from Ehime, so I've seen it in medieval archives from Shikoku such as the "Yoshoki". I talked to Professor Reizen about it, and he was extremely interested and started researching everything about it.
Iron Man...?
And at the end of it all, I'm writing the rough draft of the Professor's thesis...
What do you think you're doing? You're going to draw attention! Load it in the truck and take it away!

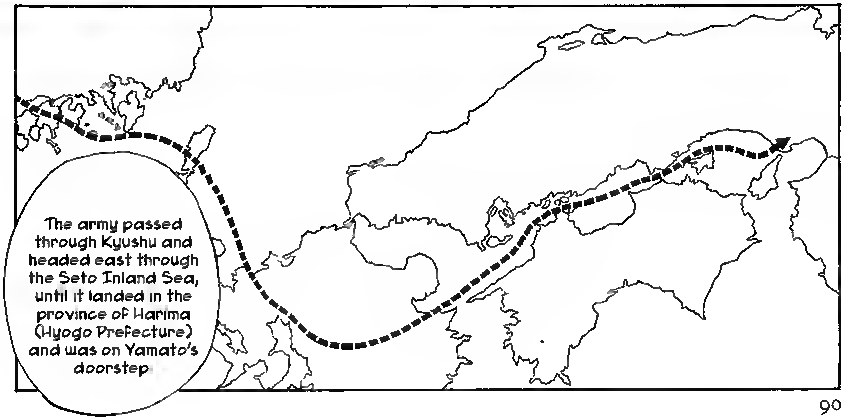
Professor Munakata of the East Asia University of Culture... What are you doing here?
This is going to be announced along with my thesis in the near future. You will have to wait until then.
Now be careful! Lift it slowly!
I must refuse.
Is it so wrong that I am here? I happened to hear about an incredible discovery, and I wanted to witness it myself.
Then tell me the reason you won't announce it now! It's an utter outrage for you to carry an ancient relic away from its discovery site at your own liberty!

W...WHAT ARE YOU DOING!? ARE YOU TRYING TO DE-STROY THE RELIC!?
You're just a professor hired by a third-rate university. It would be to our mutual benefits if you stayed out of this
Or do you want me to speak directly to your president? I can easily have you fired...

Hahaha hahaha!
Heh!
Hehe he...
FORGET IT! STOP BOWING TO THAT FOOLISH PROFES-SOR!
Professor Reizen glared at me, too. There goes my shot at being assistant professor...

Hehehe... Then I guess I'll have to apply to your school, Professor Munakata.
You'll only catch his folly if you work under him!
It's all because of territorial bureaucratic professors like him that there are no good scholars in Japan!
By the way, would you continue telling me the legend of the Iron Man?
Yes. . Well, I haven't exactly raised any good scholars myself..
Yes...
According to the Yoshoki, an army of thousands from the kingdom of Baekje invaded Japan.
And their general was the "Iron Man"...


As its name suggests, the Iron Man was a monster made entirely of iron, impervious to the sword or the bow.
Ochi-no-Masumi, the general of Iyo, Shikoku, who was sent to meet it, was powerless before it and admitted its advance.

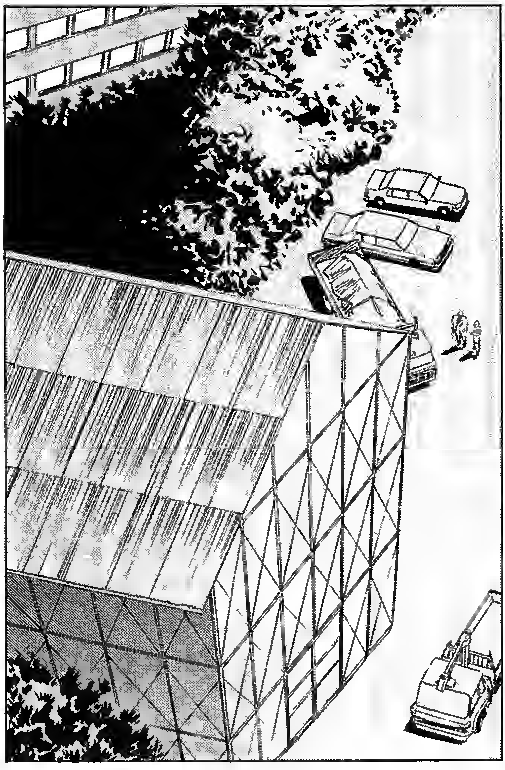

The army passed through Kyushu and headed east through the Seto Inland Sea, until it landed in the province of Harima (Hyogo Prefecture) and was on Yamato's doorstep.

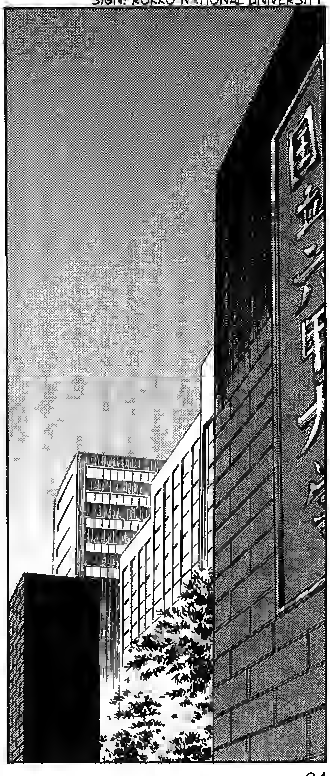
But Masumi had discovered that the Iron Man's one weakness was the sole of its foot, and he finally defeated it with his strong bow.
Kobe
Awaro Island
The army took flight, having lost the Iron Man, and Japan was protected
And it is said that the defeated Iron Man was here in Kobe... Right in the area of Suma.

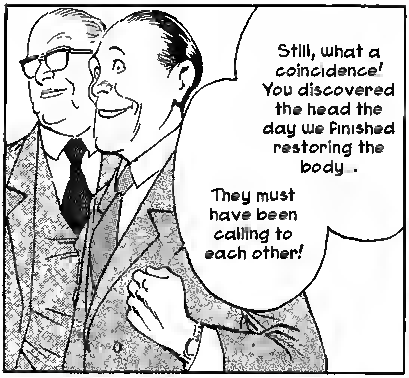
So it would be consistent to think that the head unearthed by the earthquake in Kobe was the head of the Iron Man!
I see...
The Chiyou is not the only legend of the Iron Man. They can be found all over the world, and they all have a common pattern. For instance...
The famous hero Achilles was tempered in fire by his mother to have flesh like steel, but the one spot that she neglected to temper became his weakness.
This was Achilles' heel.
In ancient Greece, the king of Crete was said to be defended by the bronze man Talos. He was said to heat his own body red-hot and burn his enemies to death.
But his weakness was the nail in his heel. If this was pulled out, he would stop moving.

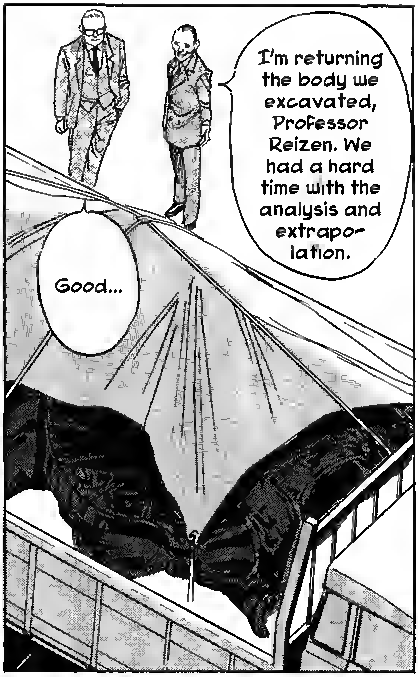
I overlooked this as a mere fictitious legend with origins in Greece...
But I suppose the Iron Man's head truly exists...
These myths all follow the pattern that even the most invulnerable body has a weakness. And most of these are related to the foot.
Benkei's Weakness... Even Benkei, whose weakness was his shin, was said to have been born with an iron body because his mother ate an iron hoe as she gave birth to him.
We've already discovered the Iron Man's body from a fault immediately after the earthquake!
Professor Munakata, I haven't told you this until now, but...
.....
WHAT DID YOU SAY!?

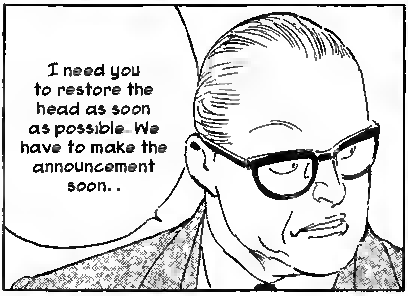
SIGN: ROKKO NATIONAL UNIVERSITY






Still, what a coincidence! You discovered the head the day we finished restoring the body..
They must have been calling to each other!


I'm returning the body we excavated, Professor Reizen. We had a hard time with the analysis and extrapolation.
Good...


I need you to restore the head as soon as possible. We have to make the announcement soon..

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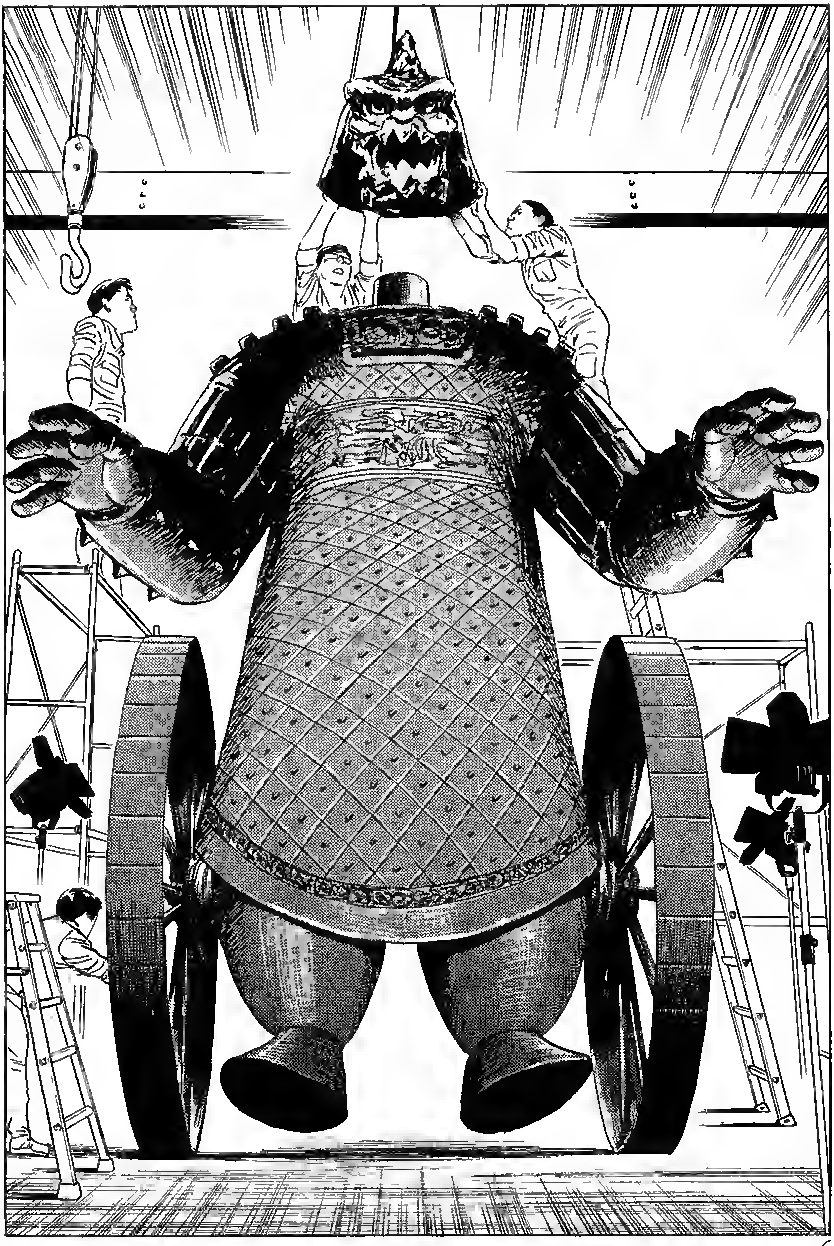
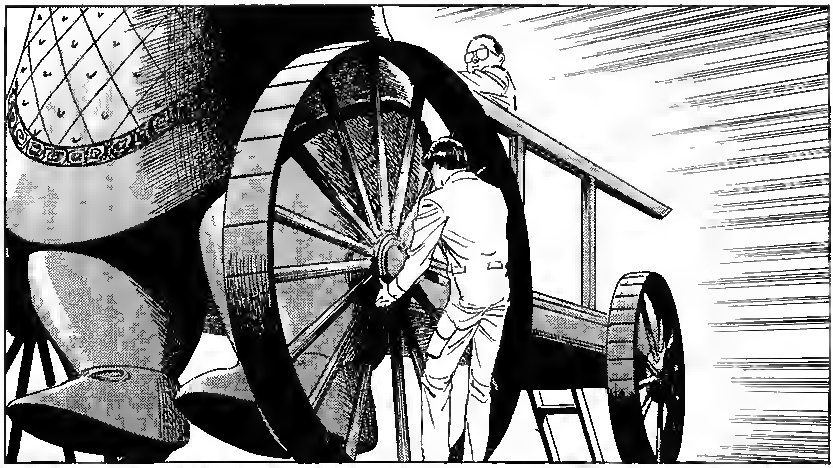
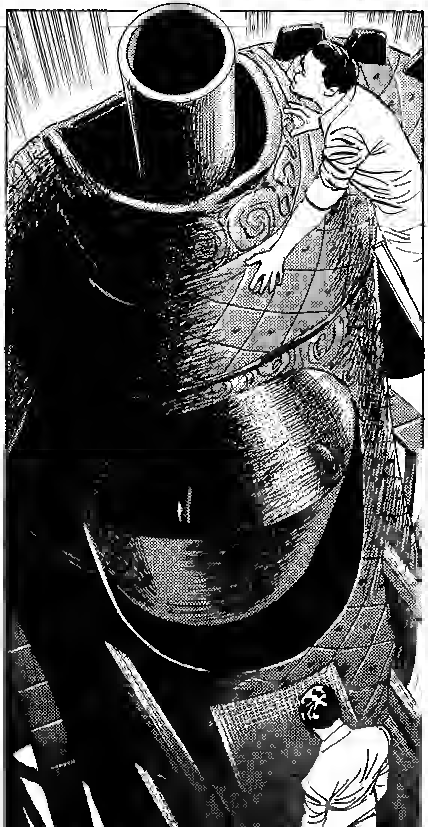
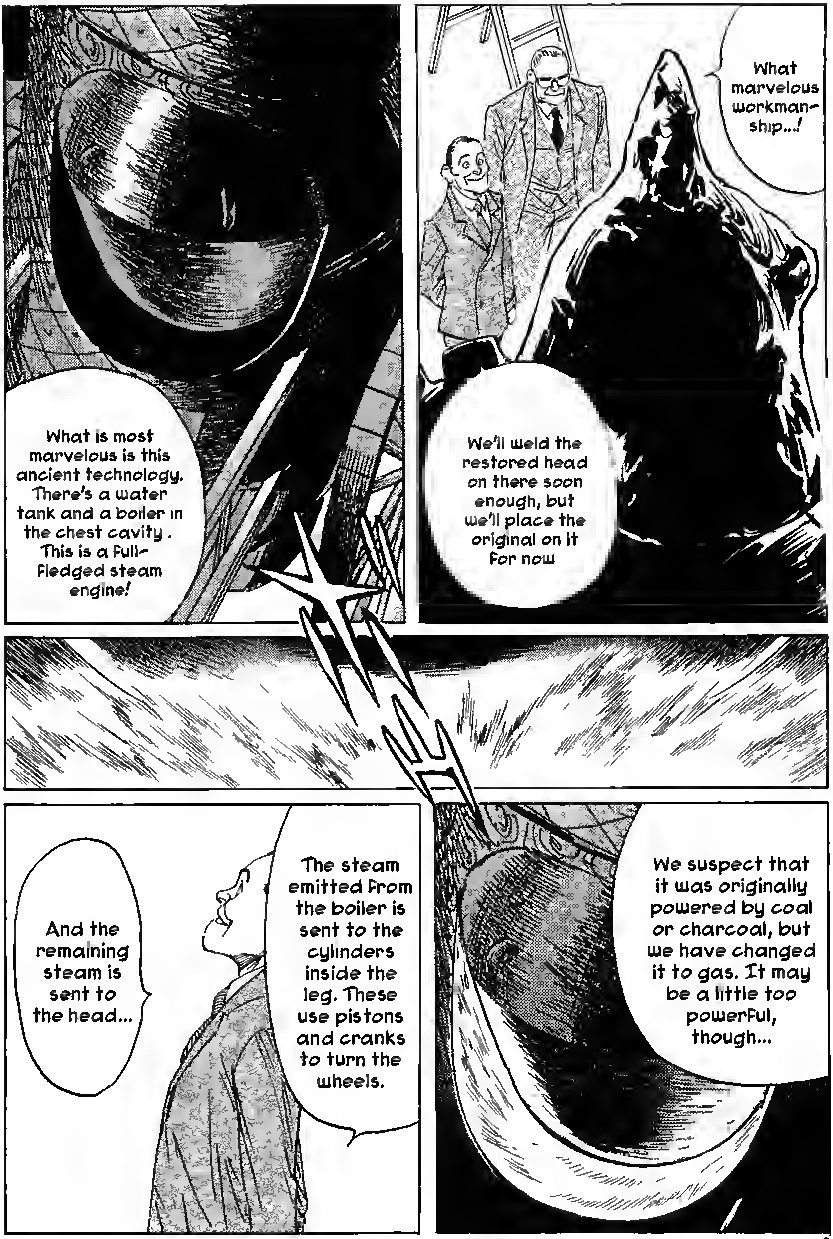
Hehehe.. You'll get a return on your investment soon enough.
That's easy for you to say, but I'm only a volunteer with an ironworks!








What is most marvelous is this ancient technology. There's a water tank and a boiler in the chest cavity. This is a full-fledged steam engine!
What marvelous workmanship...!
We'll weld the restored head on there soon enough, but we'll place the original on it for now
We suspect that it was originally powered by coal or charcoal, but we have changed it to gas. It may be a little too powerful, though...
The steam emitted from the boiler is sent to the cylinders inside the leg. These use pistons and cranks to turn the wheels.
And the remaining steam is sent to the head...

It emits high-temperature steam from its mouth... scalding anyone who comes near it.
And a branch of this tribe survived in Samhan and invaded Japan... This is the truth of the Iron Man's legend!
The Chiyou of ancient China must have been from a tribe with robotic weapons such as this.
This discovery will rock the world!
An ancient heavy tank... or perhaps I ought to call it a battle robot!
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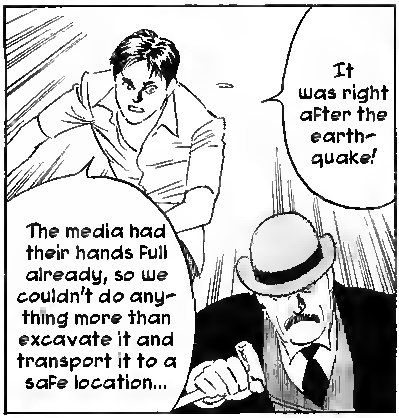
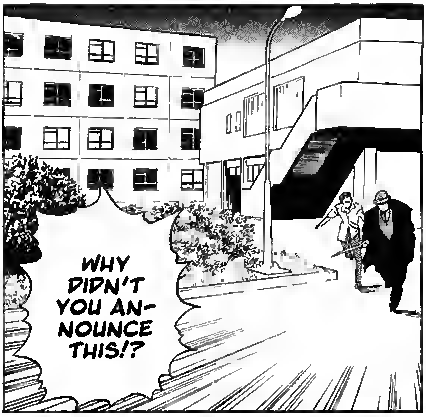
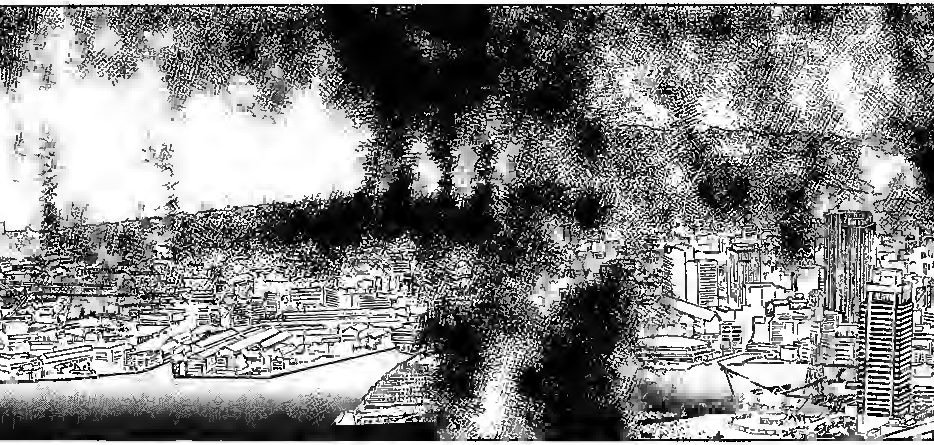
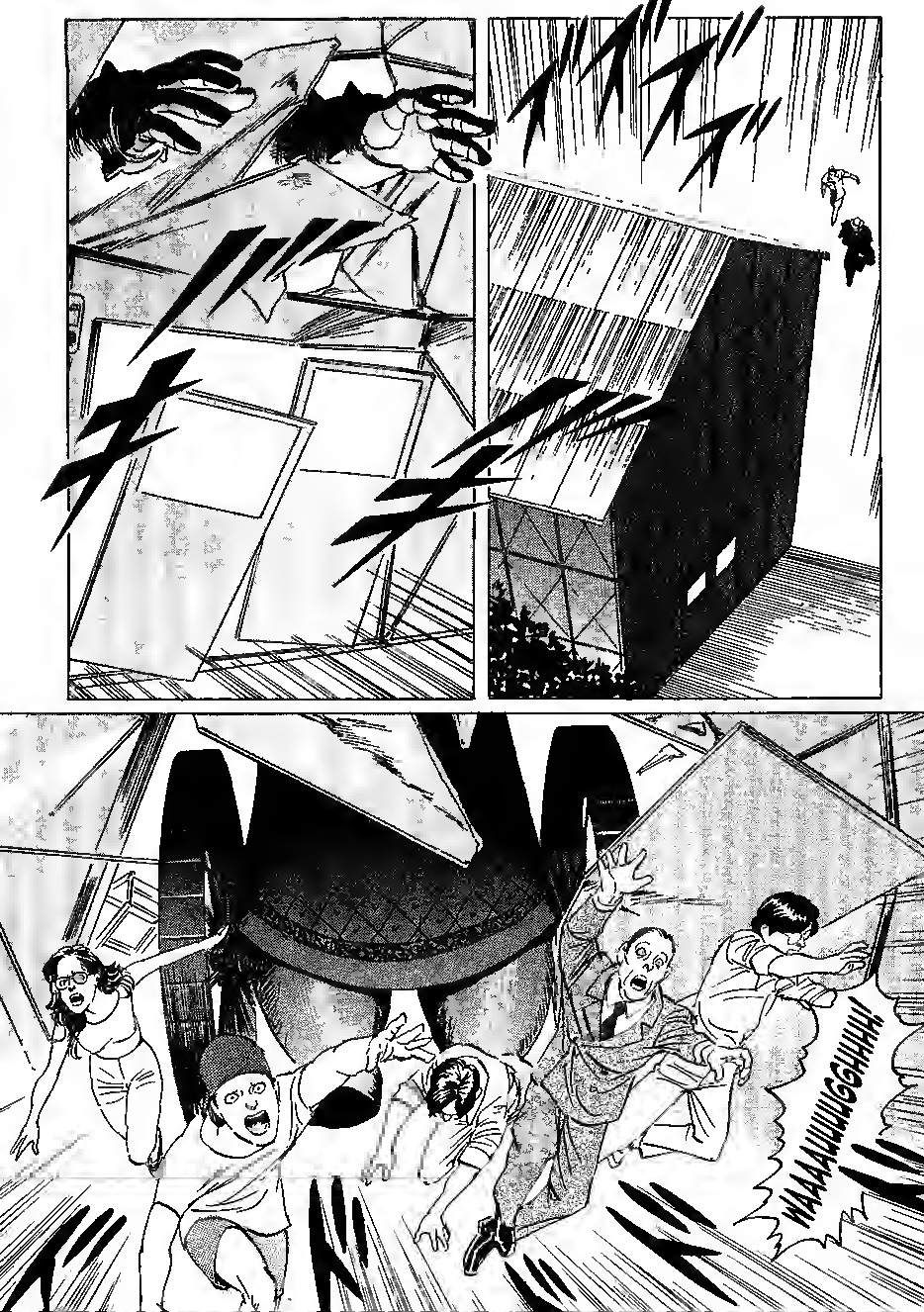
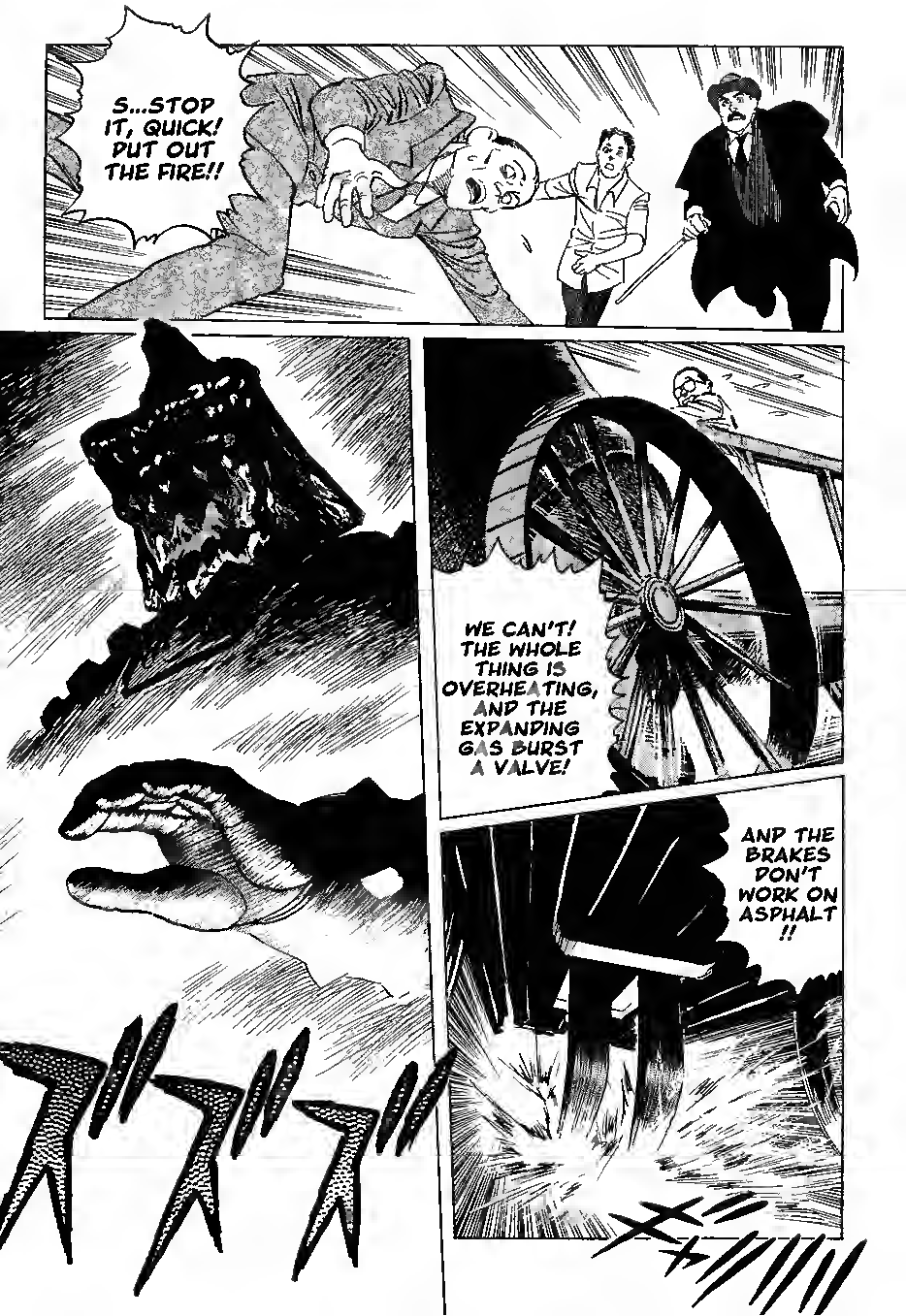

It was right after the earth-quake!
The media had their hands full already, so we couldn't do any-thing more than excavate it and transport it to a safe location...

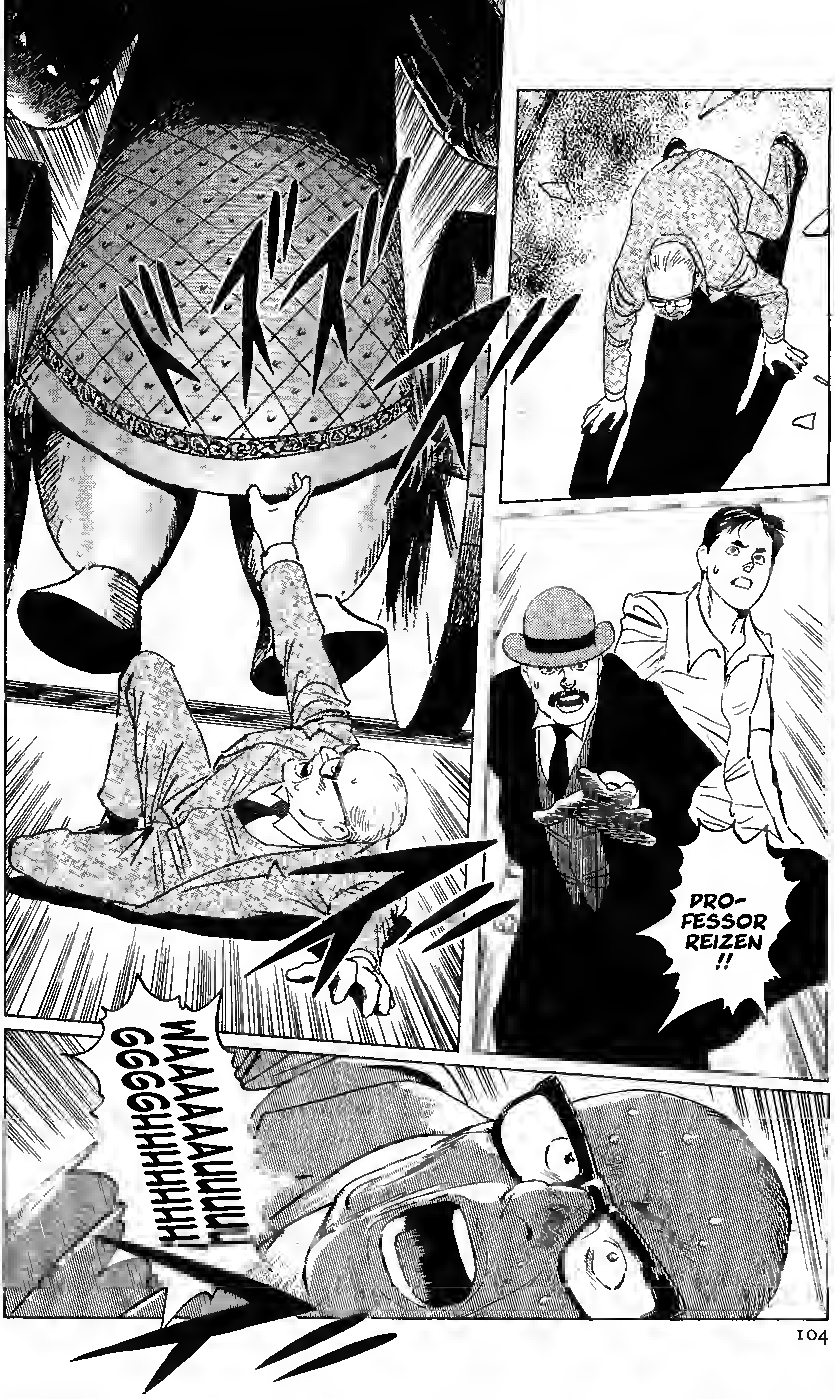

WHY DIDN'T YOU AN-NOUNCE THIS!?



By the time that the restoration was underway and we had the time to research it, Professor Reizen commissioned the president of a major steel manufacturing firm called Banshu Steel to restore the body.
But the announcement should have come first!
The professor's excuse was that the announcement was already delayed, so they could afford to wait until the restoration was complete.
And the city authorities connived with him?
So that old badger was just buying time to monopolize the discovery!
If he announced that the Iron Man had been discovered and fully restored through the earthquake that cost the city so much,
he figured it would become the symbol of Kobe's restoration...!


AAAAUUUUGHHHH!


S...STOP IT, QUICK! PUT OUT THE FIRE!!
WE CAN'T! THE WHOLE THING IS OVERHEATING, AND THE EXPANDING GAS BURST A VALVE!
AND THE BRAKES DON'T WORK ON ASPHALT !!


PRO-
FESSOR
REIZEN
!!
WAAAAAUUU
GGGNNNNNN

GYA AAAA HHHH HHHH HHHH HHH!

AIIIIIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

GYA AAAA AAAA HHHHH HHHH HHHH HHH!

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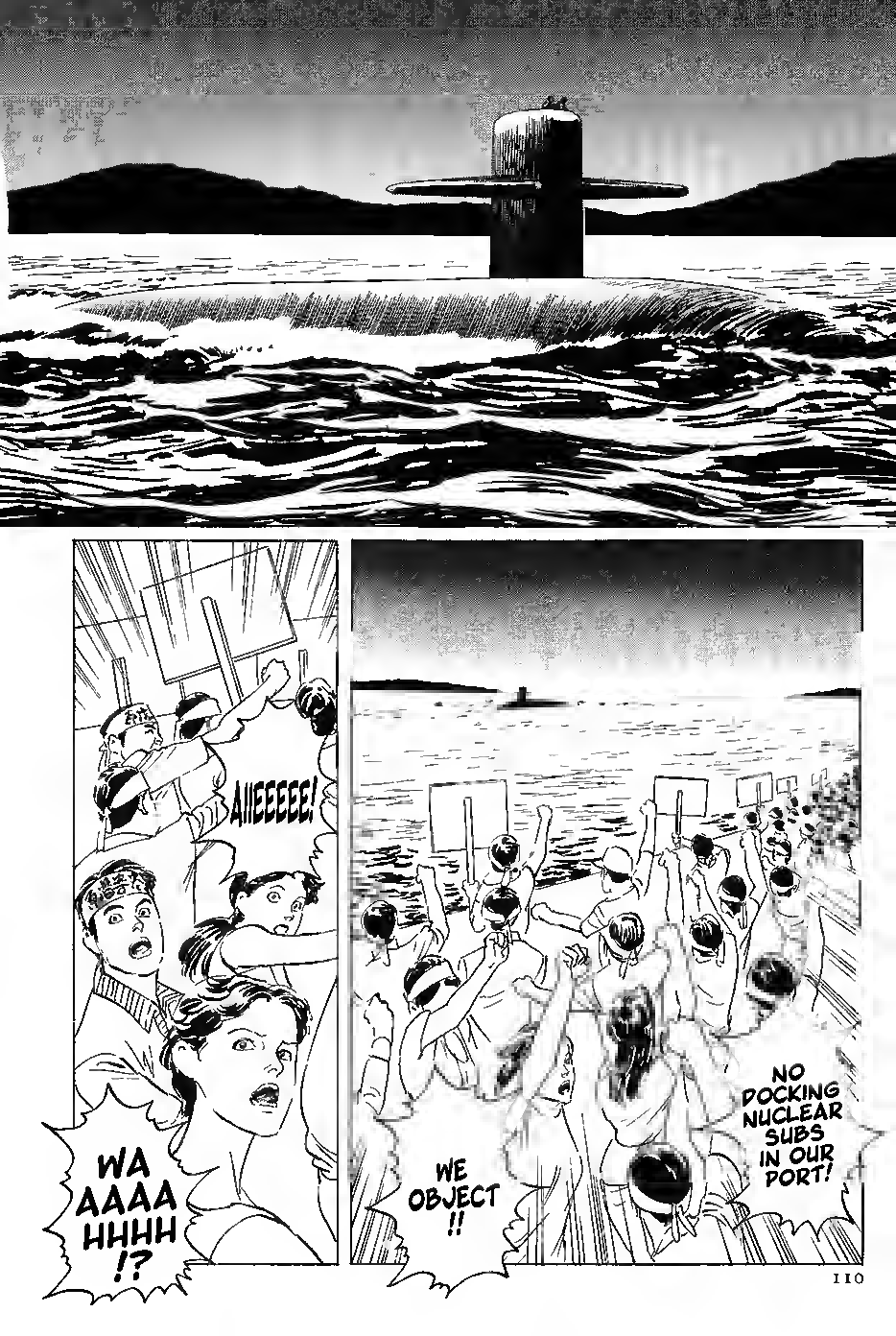
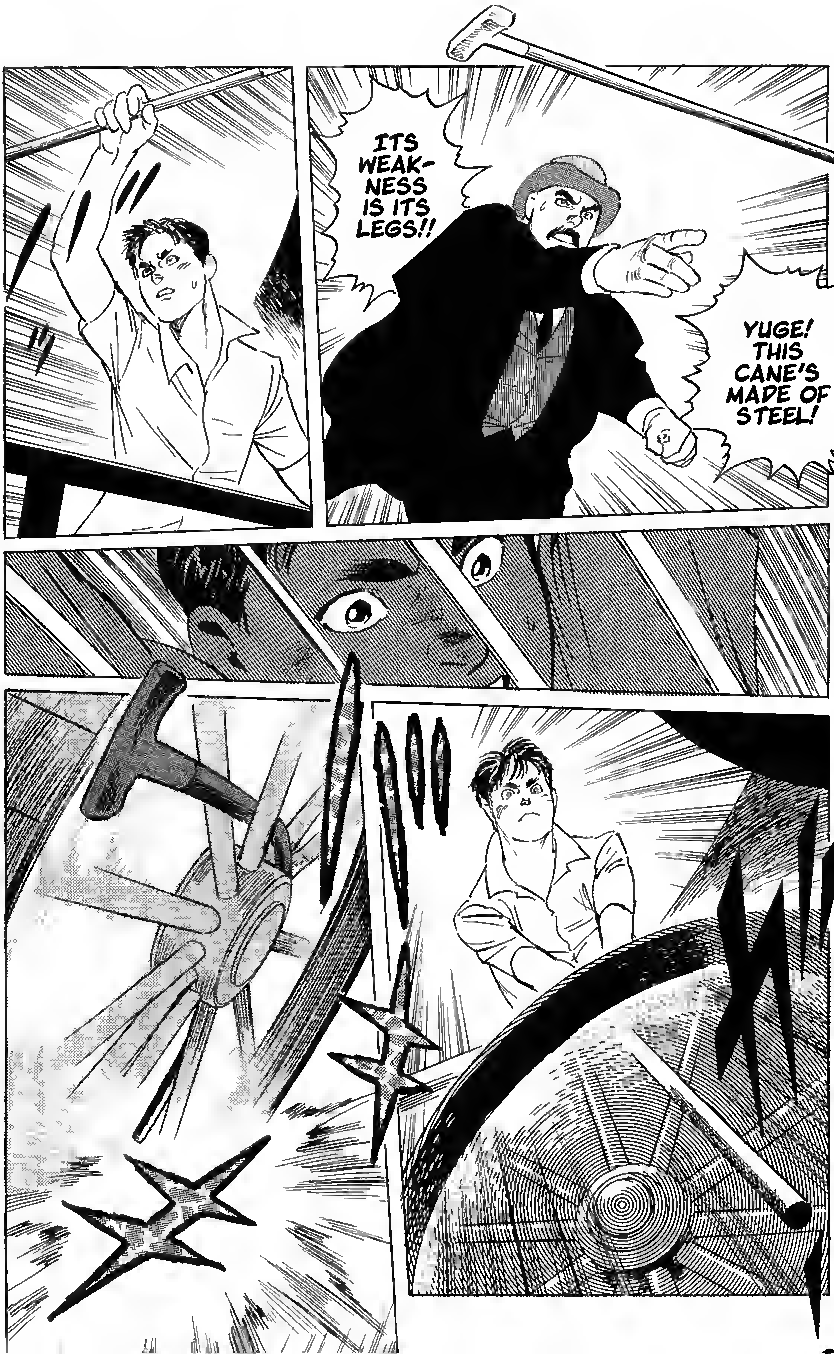
OH, NO! THAT'S WHERE CITIZEN'S GROUP IS GATHERING TONIGHT ....!!
IT'S HEADING FOR THE HARBOR!


AIIEEEEE!
WA AAAA HHHH !?
WE OBJECT !!
NO DOCKING NUCLEAR SUBS IN OUR PORT!

KCH... W... WHAT DO WE DO!?
GET OUT!


ITS WEAK-NESS IS ITS LEGS!!
YUGE! THIS CANE'S MADE OF STEEL!

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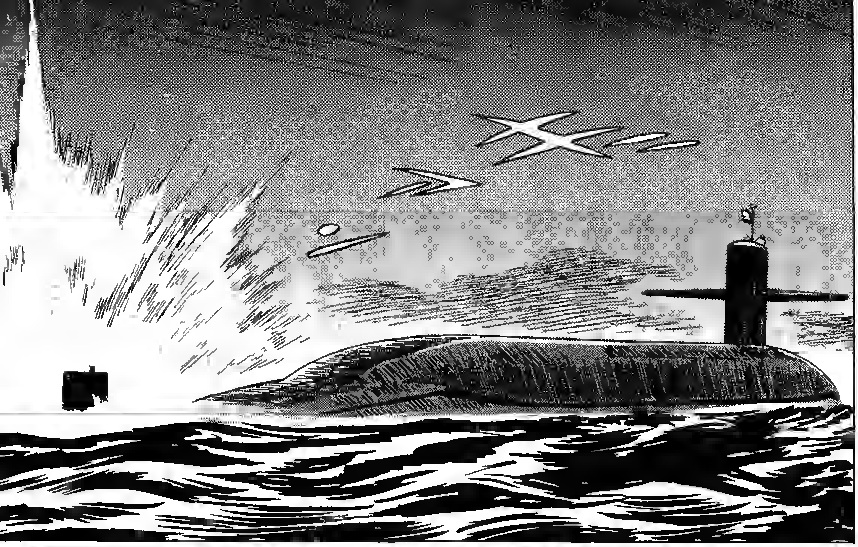
ドン



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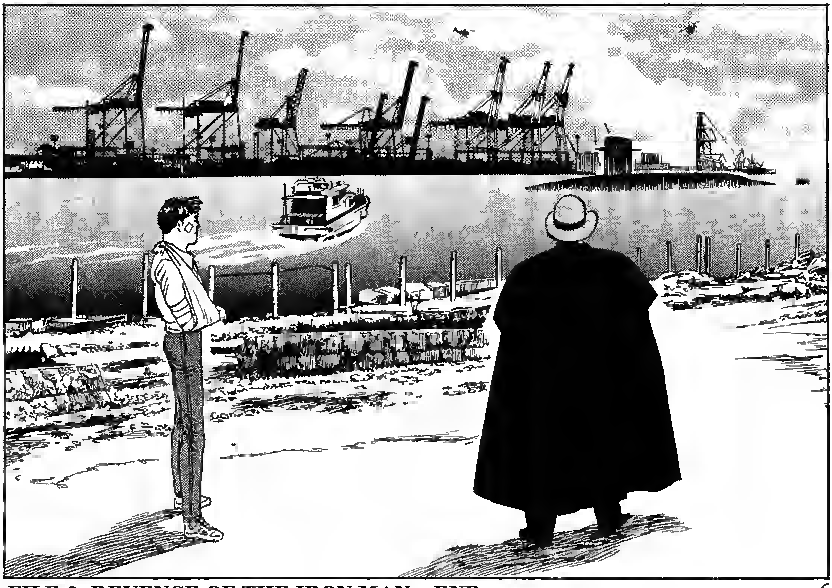
AMERICAN NUCLEAR SUBMARINE STRANDED

CLEAR SUBMARINE IN KOBE HARBOR

PROPELLER DAMAGED, STALLED AT SEA

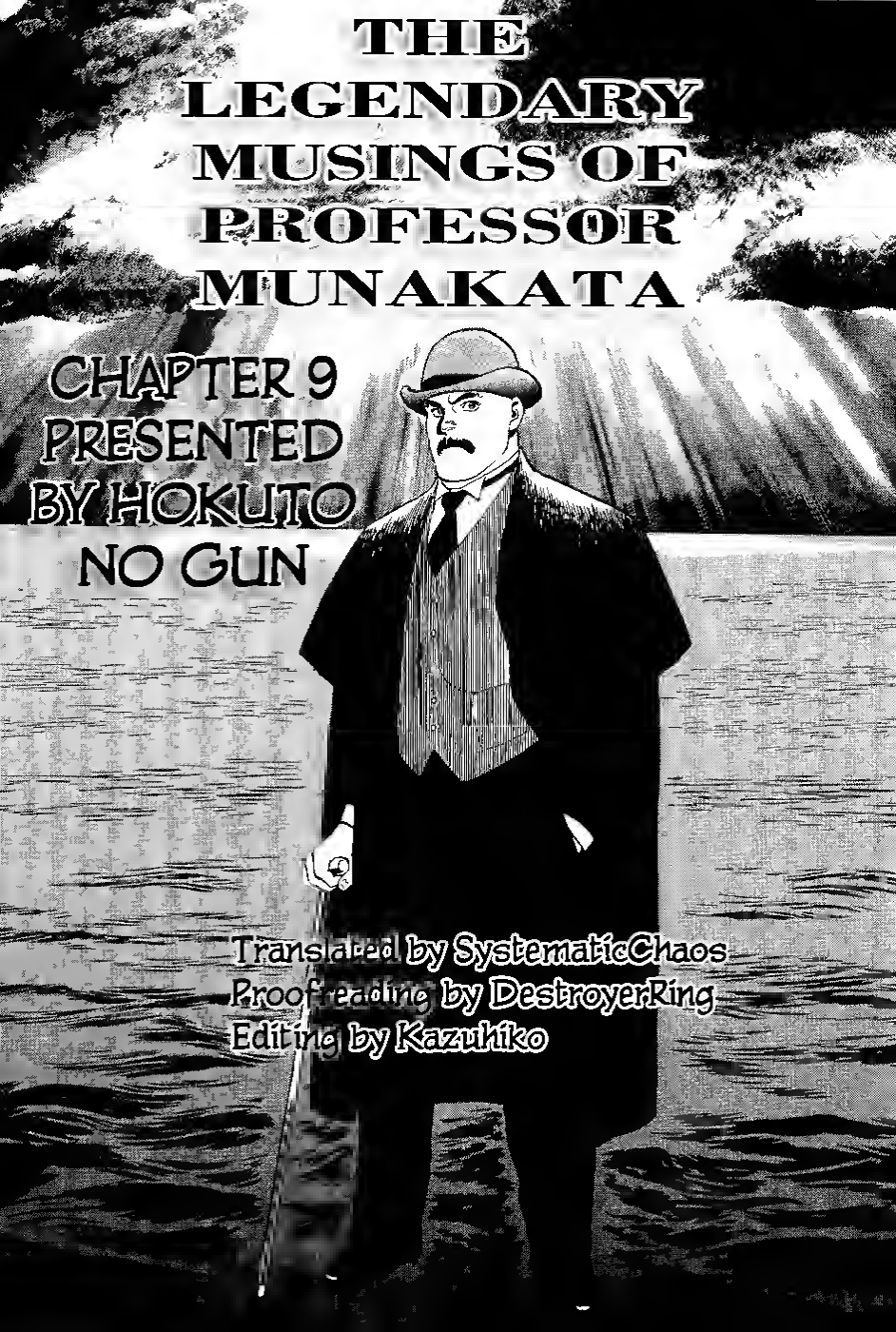
THE LARGEST NUCLEAR SUBMARINE OF THE AMERICAN NAVY, THE LOS ALAMOS (19,000 TONS) WHICH WAS MAKING A PORT CALL IN JAPAN, WAS CRUISING THROUGH SETO INLAND SEA JUST BEFORE DOCKING AT KOBE HARBOR, WHEN A FOREIGN OBJECT COLLIDED WITH THE PROPELLER, STALLING IT AT SEA. THE AMERICAN NAVY IS STILL INVESTIGATING THE CAUSE, BUT THEY SAY A RATHER LARGE METAL OBJECT FLEW AT IT FROM LAND. THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT



THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

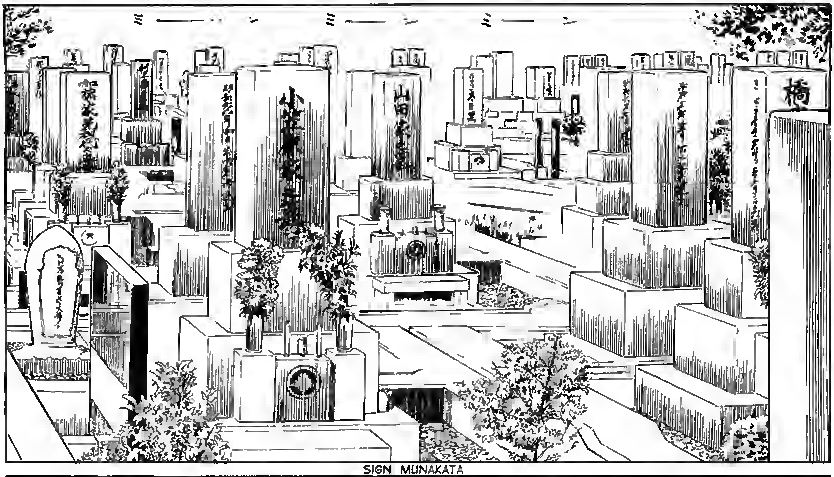
CHAPTER 9

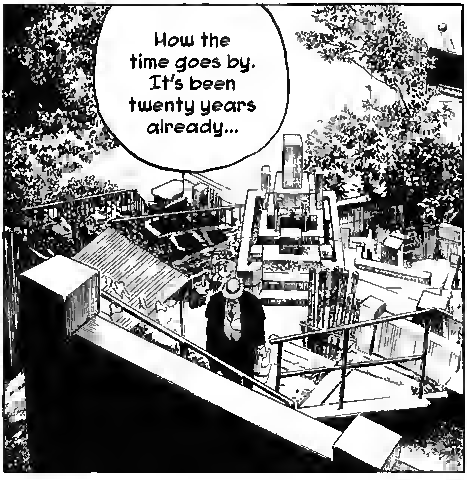
PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN

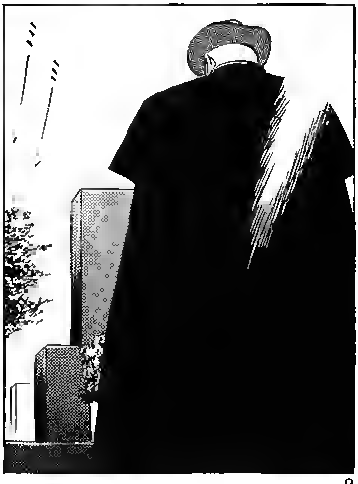


Translated by SystematicChaos
Proofreading by DestroyerRing
Editing by Kazuhiko

File 10: God of Women

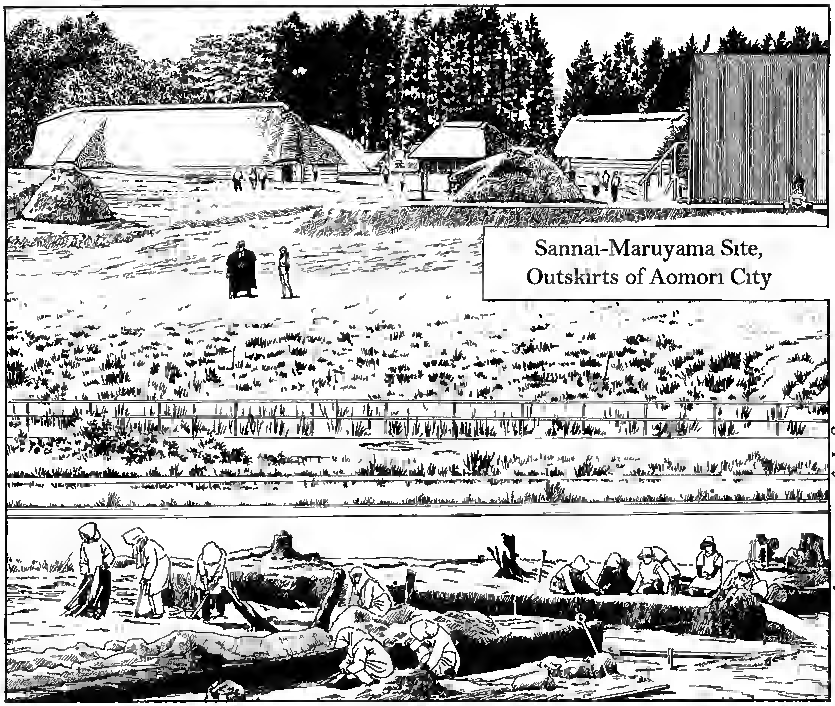

SIGN MUNAKATA
宗像


How the time goes by. It's been twenty years already...

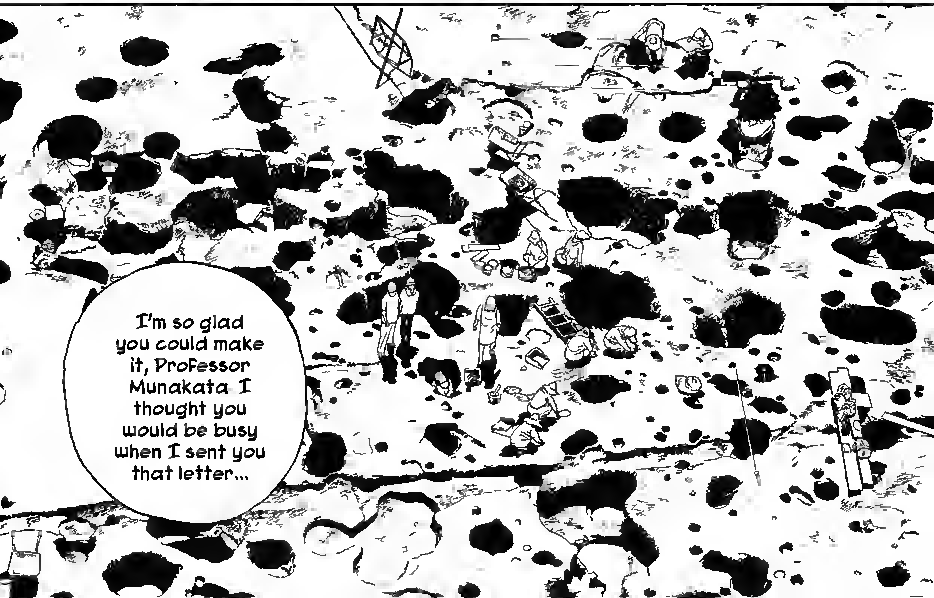


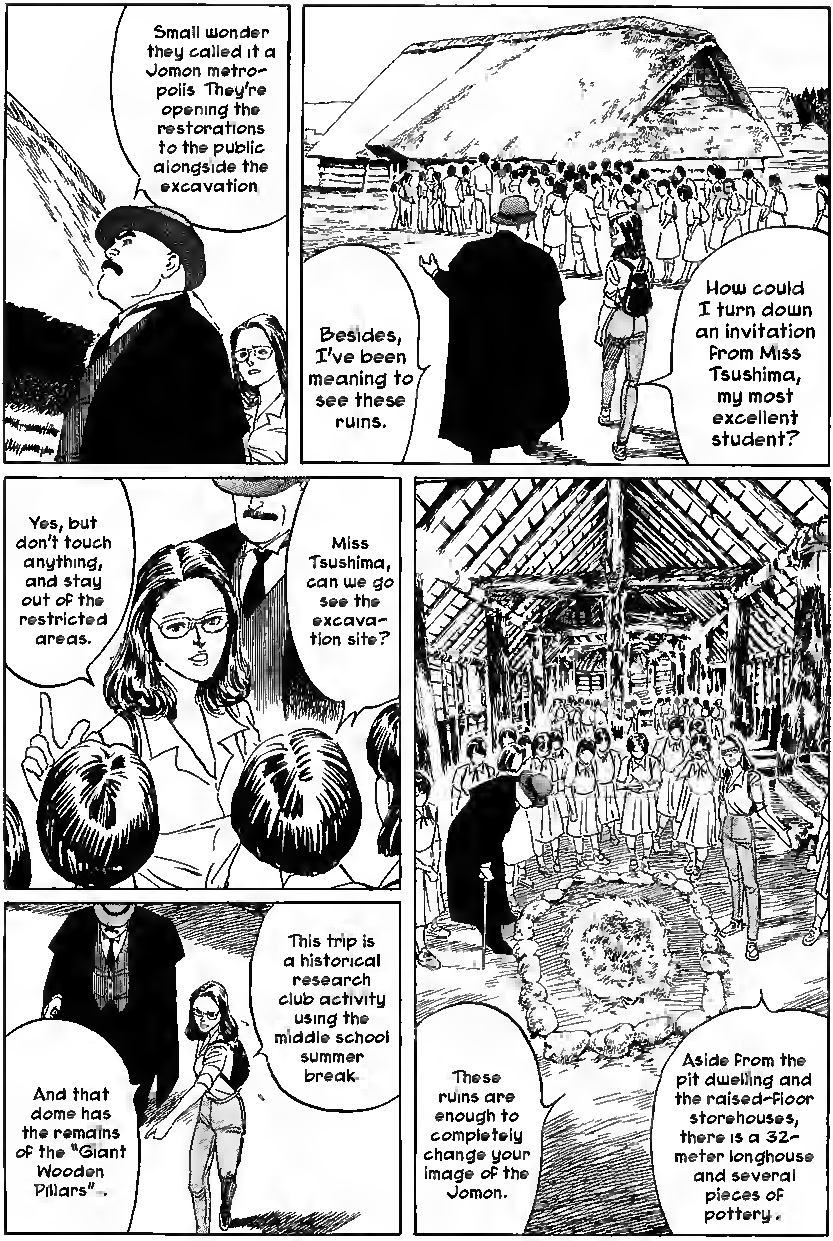
And your daughter would've grown up to be a fine young woman by now...
It must have been hard on you.. losing your wife and daughter all at once...
I'll be back around next year's Festival of the Dead. I'll see you then...
Oh, uh, I'm sorry...
Where's your research taking you this time?
To Tohoku. And don't mention it. It's all in the past

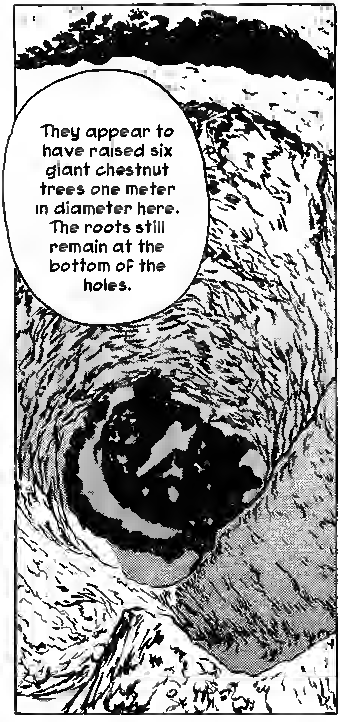
Doesn't Tashiro Yumi look like she's been gaining weight?
You think she's just gained weight? I think there's more to it than that...
Tsugaru, Aomori Prefecture

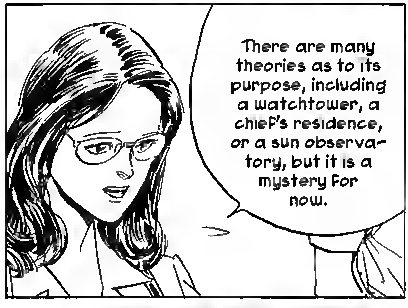


*Photography – Provided by Asahi News

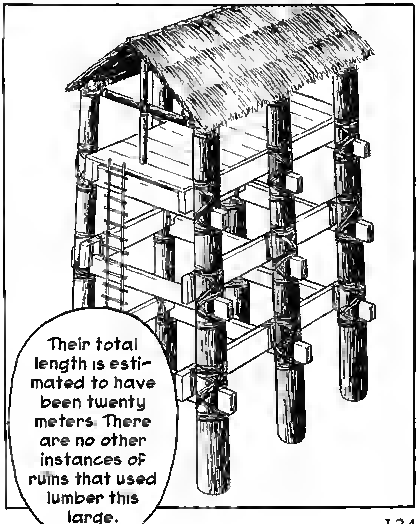


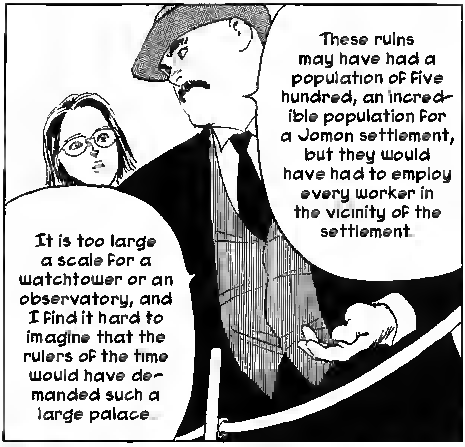

Small wonder they called it a Jomon metropolis. They're opening the restorations to the public alongside the excavation.
Besides, I've been meaning to see these ruins.
How could I turn down an invitation from Miss Tsushima, my most excellent student?
Yes, but don't touch anything, and stay out of the restricted areas.
Miss Tsushima, can we go see the excavation site?
This trip is a historical research club activity using the middle school summer break.
And that dome has the remains of the "Giant Wooden Pillars".
These ruins are enough to completely change your image of the Jomon.
Aside from the pit dwelling and the raised-floor storehouses, there is a 32-meter longhouse and several pieces of pottery.

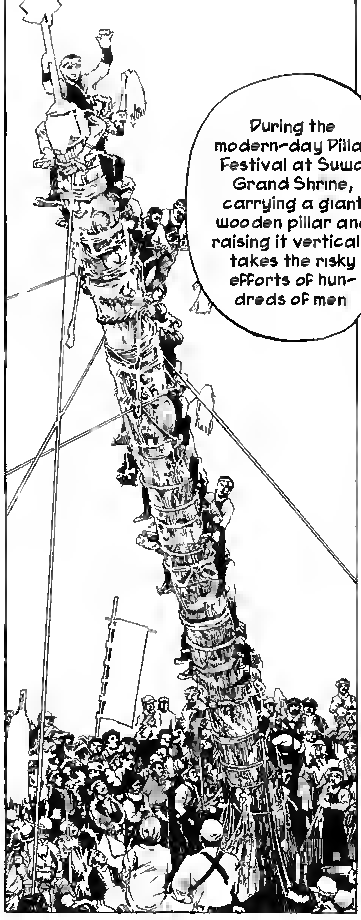

They appear to have raised six giant chestnut trees one meter in diameter here. The roots still remain at the bottom of the holes.


There are many theories as to its purpose, including a watchtower, a chief's residence, or a sun observatory, but it is a mystery for now.

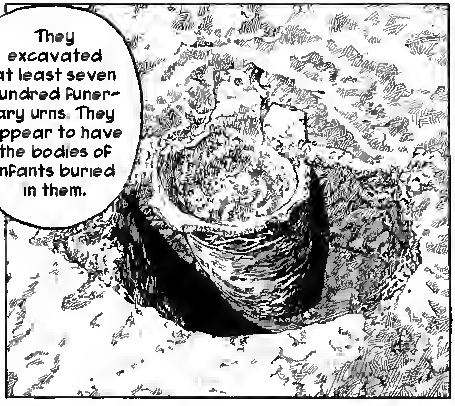
Hmm...

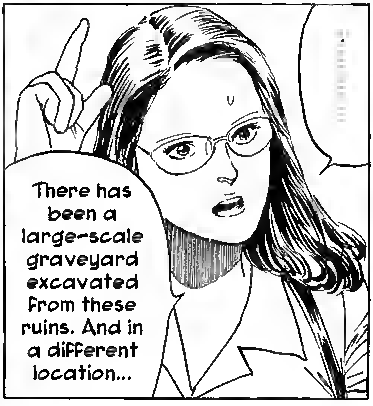

Their total length is estimated to have been twenty meters. There are no other instances of ruins that used lumber this large.

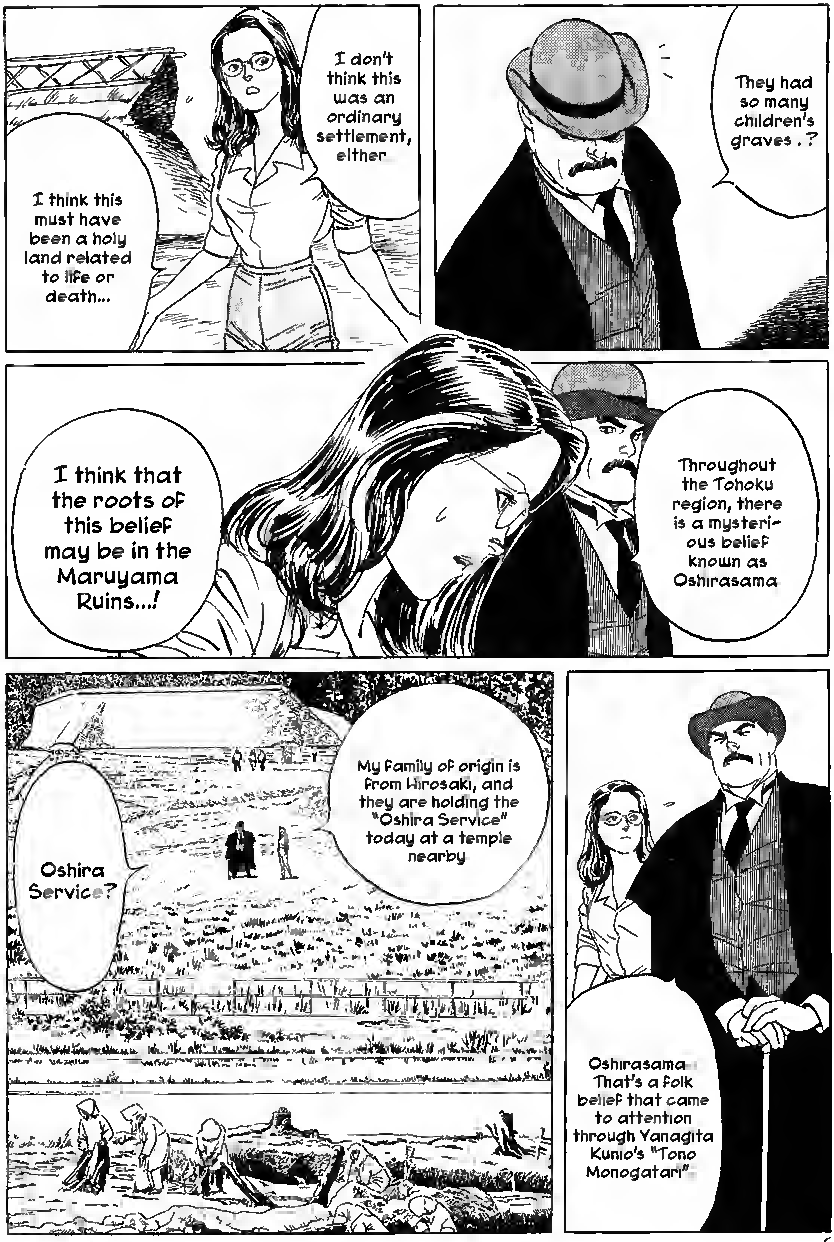

These ruins may have had a population of five hundred, an incredible population for a Jomon settlement, but they would have had to employ every worker in the vicinity of the settlement.
It is too large a scale for a watchtower or an observatory, and I find it hard to imagine that the rulers of the time would have demanded such a large palace.


During the modern-day Pillar Festival at Suwa Grand Shrine, carrying a giant wooden pillar and raising it vertically takes the risky efforts of hundreds of men.

I think it must have been some kind of ritual facility... And one that came from a rather deeply-held belief.

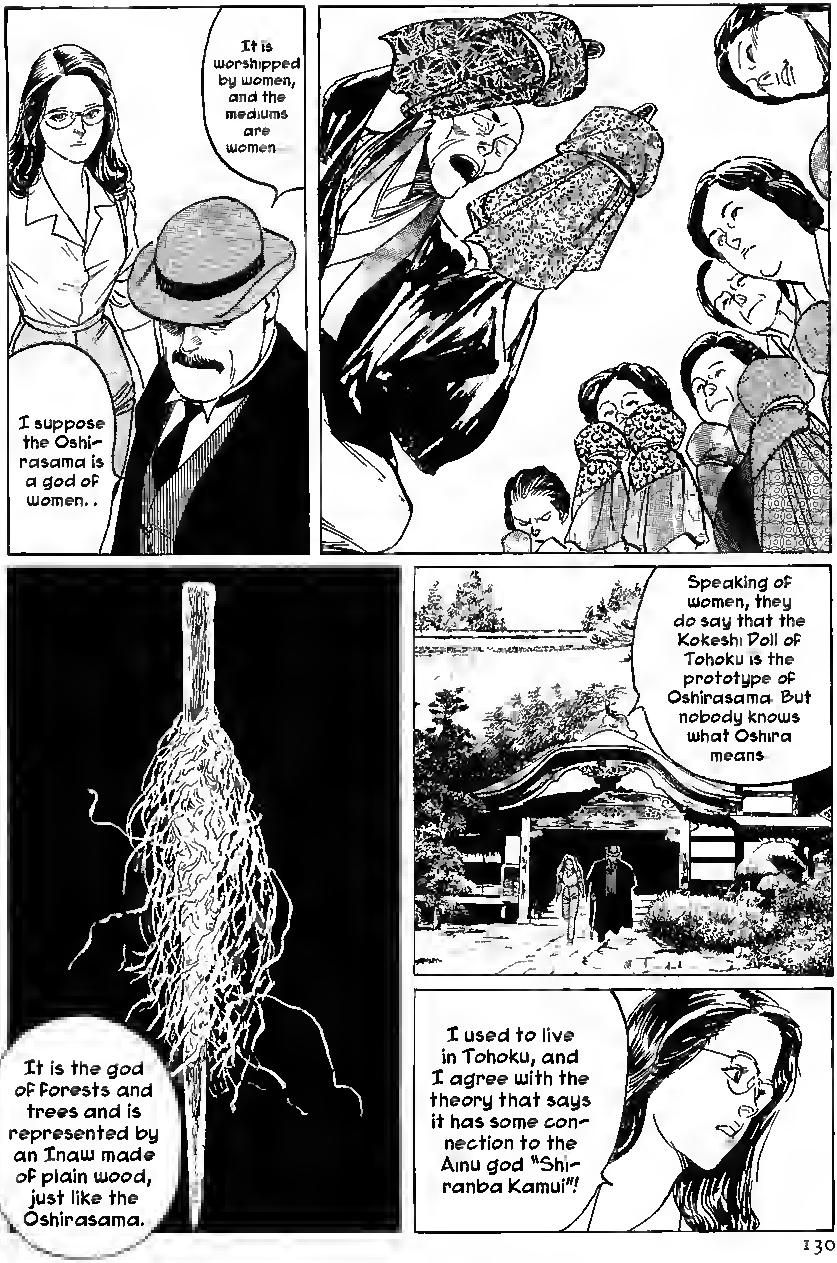

They excavated at least seven hundred funerary urns. They appear to have the bodies of infants buried in them.

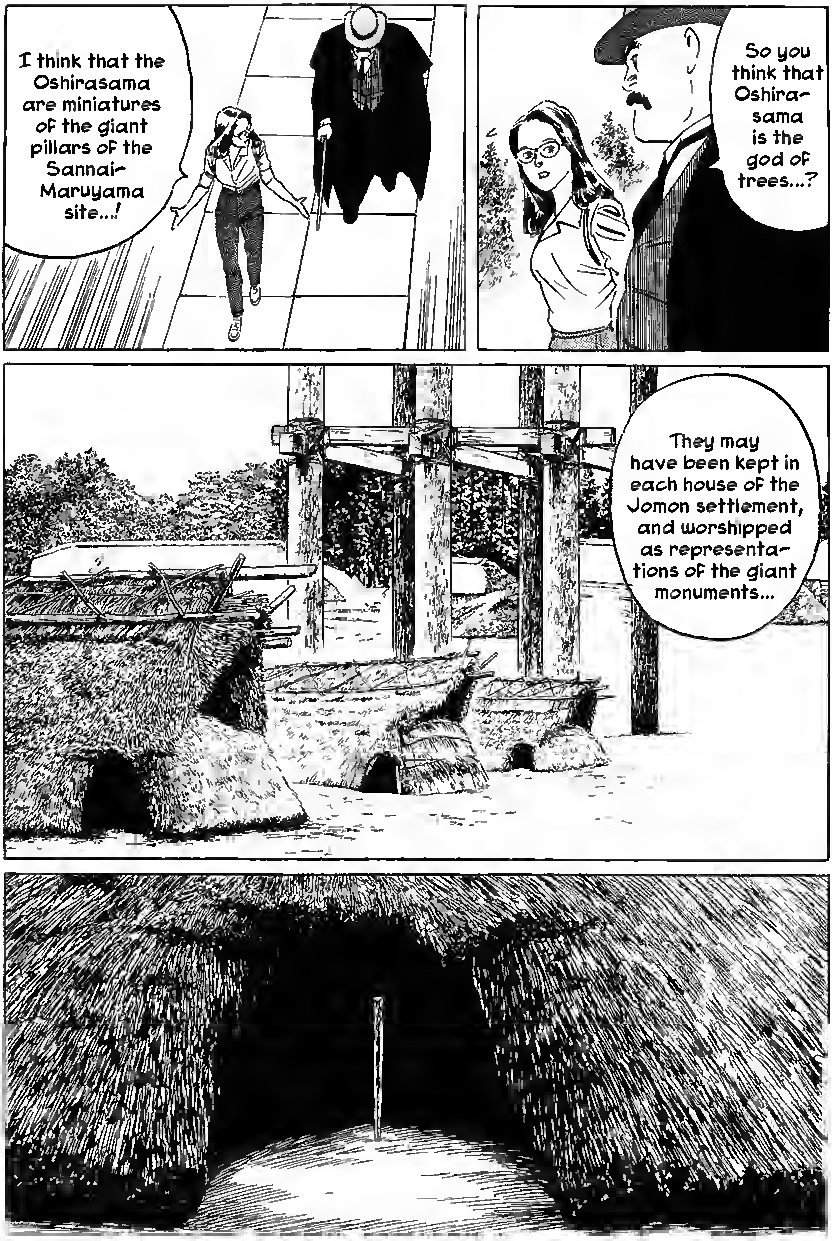

There has been a large-scale graveyard excavated from these ruins. And in a different location...

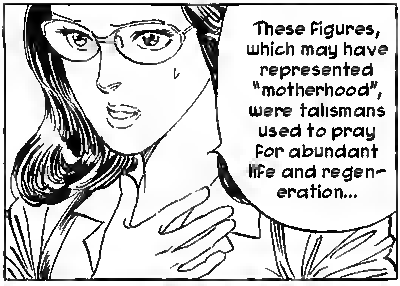

I don't think this was an ordinary settlement, either
I think this must have been a holy land related to life or death...
They had so many children's graves..?
Throughout the Tohoku region, there is a mysterious belief known as Oshirasama
I think that the roots of this belief may be in the Maruyama Ruins...!
My family of origin is from Hirosaki, and they are holding the "Oshira Service" today at a temple nearby
Oshira Service?
Oshirasama... That's a folk belief that came to attention through Yanagita Kunio's "Tono Monogatari"

Those are the Oshirasama. The shapes vary by each household, but they are essentially a piece of wood with clothes. It is worshipped by the wife of the household.
This is called Osendaku. They use this chance to change their clothes.
So they bring them to the temple to have them blessed. .

Though you and I cannot exchange words, I now speak through this medium's mouth, so heed each of my divinations...
...Now then, my precious one, I am glad you have kept me in your heart, and come every year to hear my divinations...
Mediums!
The Oshirasama loves play, and it is said to be happy to be carried on a child's back and join their play.
They are oracles. They are speaking the Oshira-sama's messages.
This is called Kami-Asobase, and it is said to comfort the Oshirasama, as well.

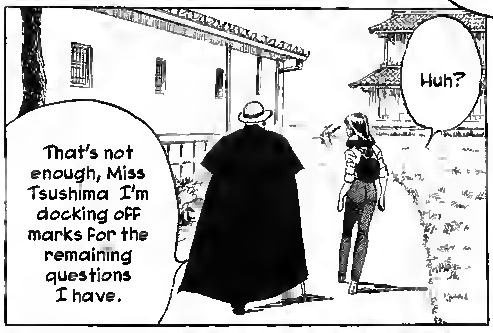

It is worshipped by women, and the mediums are women.
I suppose the Oshirasama is a god of women...
Speaking of women, they do say that the Kokeshi Doll of Tohoku is the prototype of Oshirasama. But nobody knows what Oshira means.
It is the god of forests and trees and is represented by an Inaw made of plain wood, just like the Oshirasama.
I used to live in Tohoku, and I agree with the theory that says it has some connection to the Ainu god "Shiranba Kamui"!


I think that the Oshirasama are miniatures of the giant pillars of the Sannai-Maruyama site...!
So you think that Oshira-sama is the god of trees...?
They may have been kept in each house of the Jomon settlement, and worshipped as representations of the giant monuments...

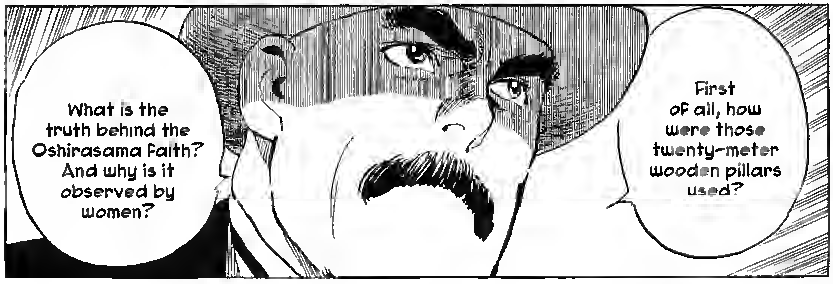

These figures, which may have represented "motherhood", were talismans used to pray for abundant life and regeneration...

They have also excavated an unprecedentedly high number of complete earthen figures from the Maruyama site.

I think that the god of trees and motherhood were a set, and they form the faith of the Jomon people.

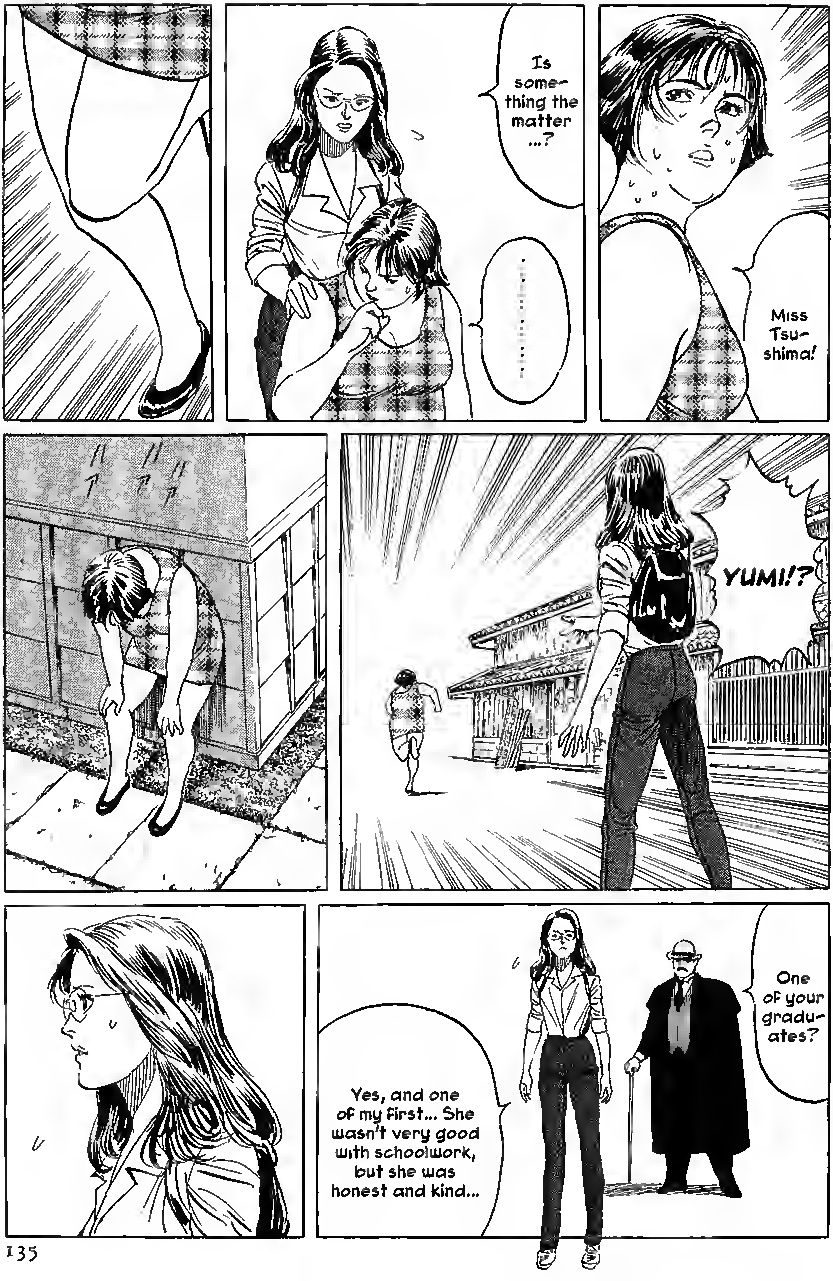

Huh?
That's not enough, Miss Tsushima. I'm docking off marks for the remaining questions I have.

B minus!

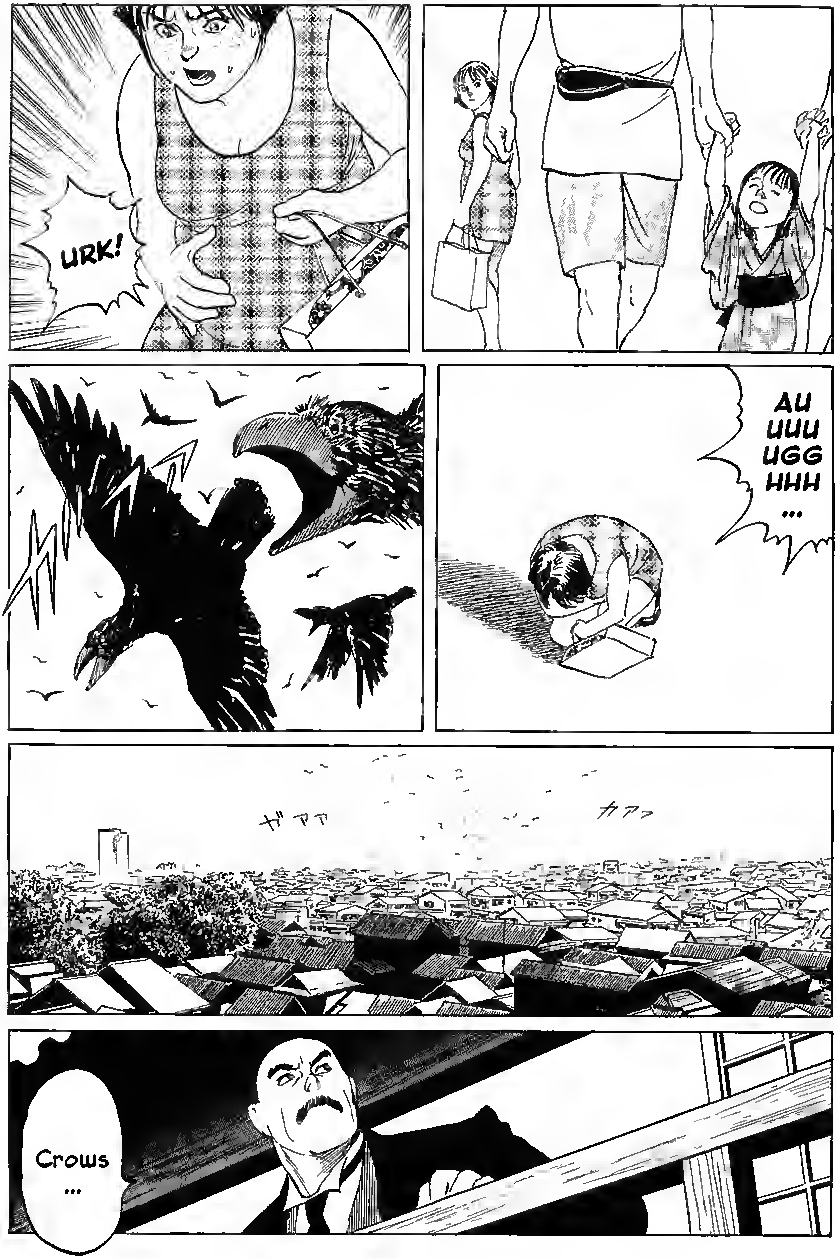

What is the truth behind the Oshirasama faith? And why is it observed by women?
First of all, how were those twenty-meter wooden pillars used?

There's a lot I'd like to talk to you about.
Professor, my family runs an inn nearby. Would you like to stay there tonight?
Think of these questions all together.
...So you became a middle school teacher in Hirosaki after graduating from university?
Thank you!
Then I guess I'll take you up on your offer.
No, I was transferred about five years ago to a middle school in Aomori City... This is actually my first time coming back to Hirosaki in a while...

It's me, Tsushima! Your homeroom teacher!
Tashiro? Aren't you Tashiro Yumi?

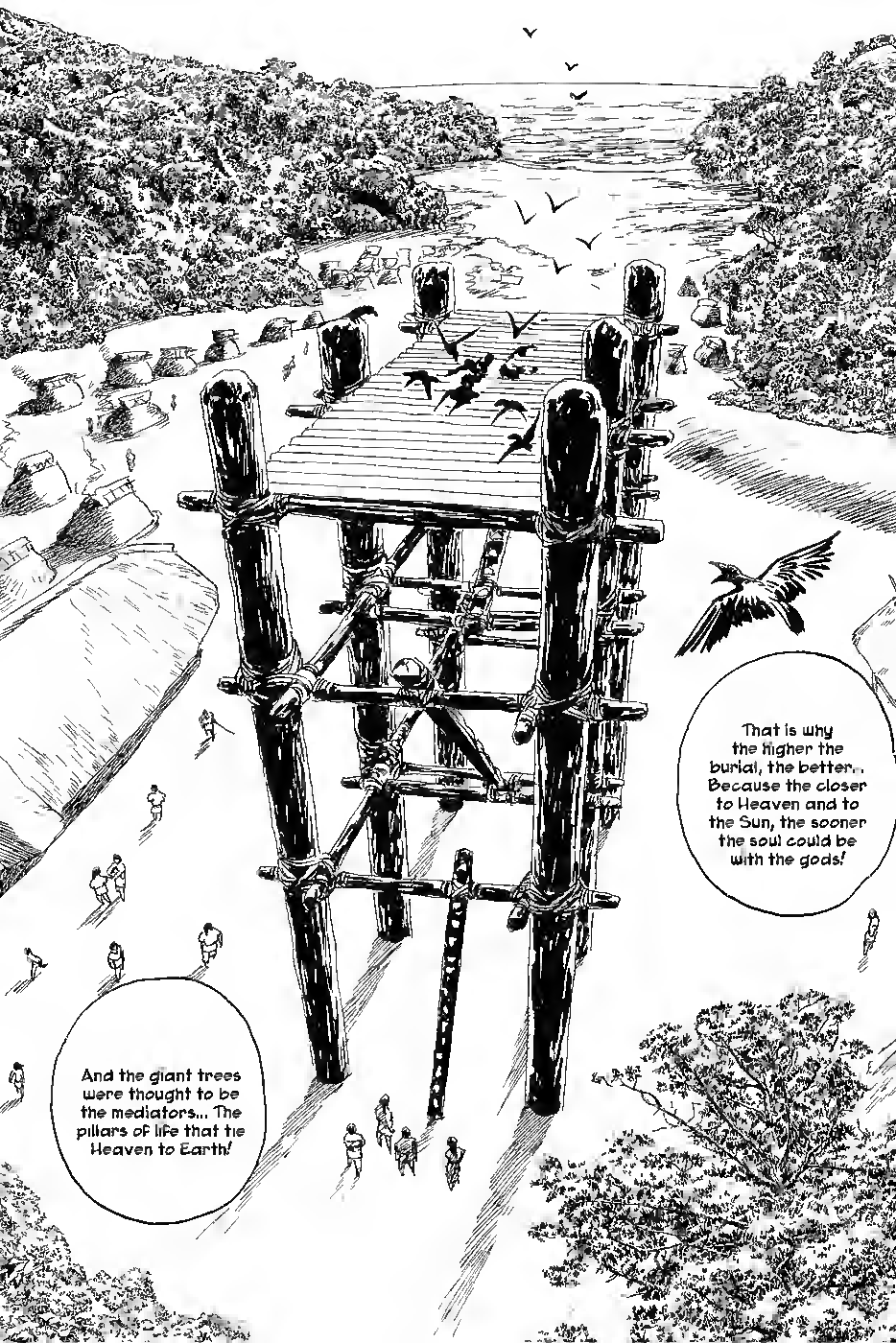

Is something the matter...?
.....
Miss Tsushima!
YUMI!?
One of your graduates?
Yes, and one of my first... She wasn't very good with schoolwork, but she was honest and kind...

Thank you very much!


URK!
AU UUU UGG HHH ...
ガアア
カアア
Crows ...

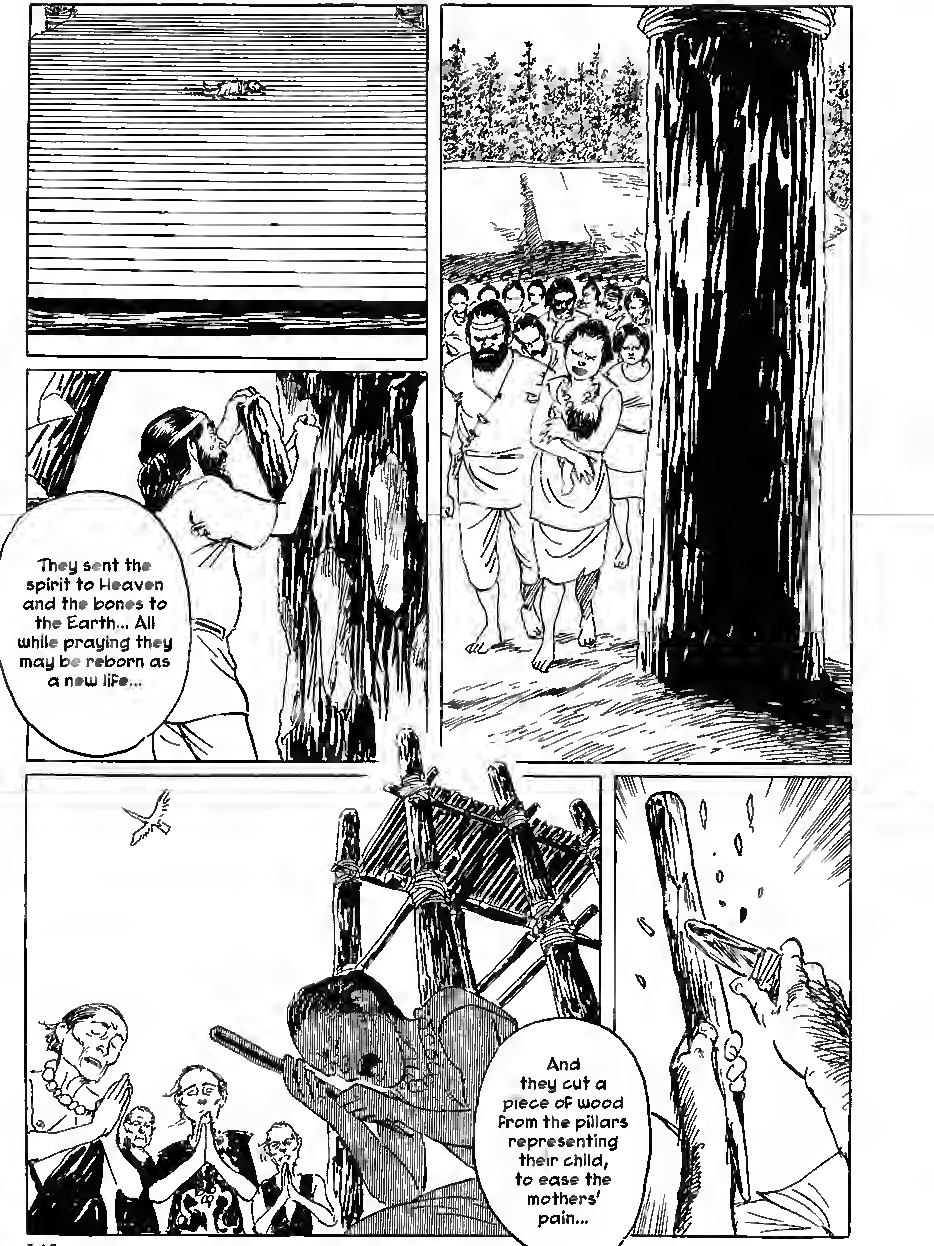
My mother said she's going to feed you plenty of the local cuisine.
Birds... Hmm...
What if the giant wooden pillar were a facility for sky burials?
Huh?
A sky burial ...
There are traces of this form of burial being widely held in ancient Japan!
In a broad sense, it is regarded as similar to a wind burial or a tower burial. The corpse is placed on a high place and left to the birds, after which they bury the bones.

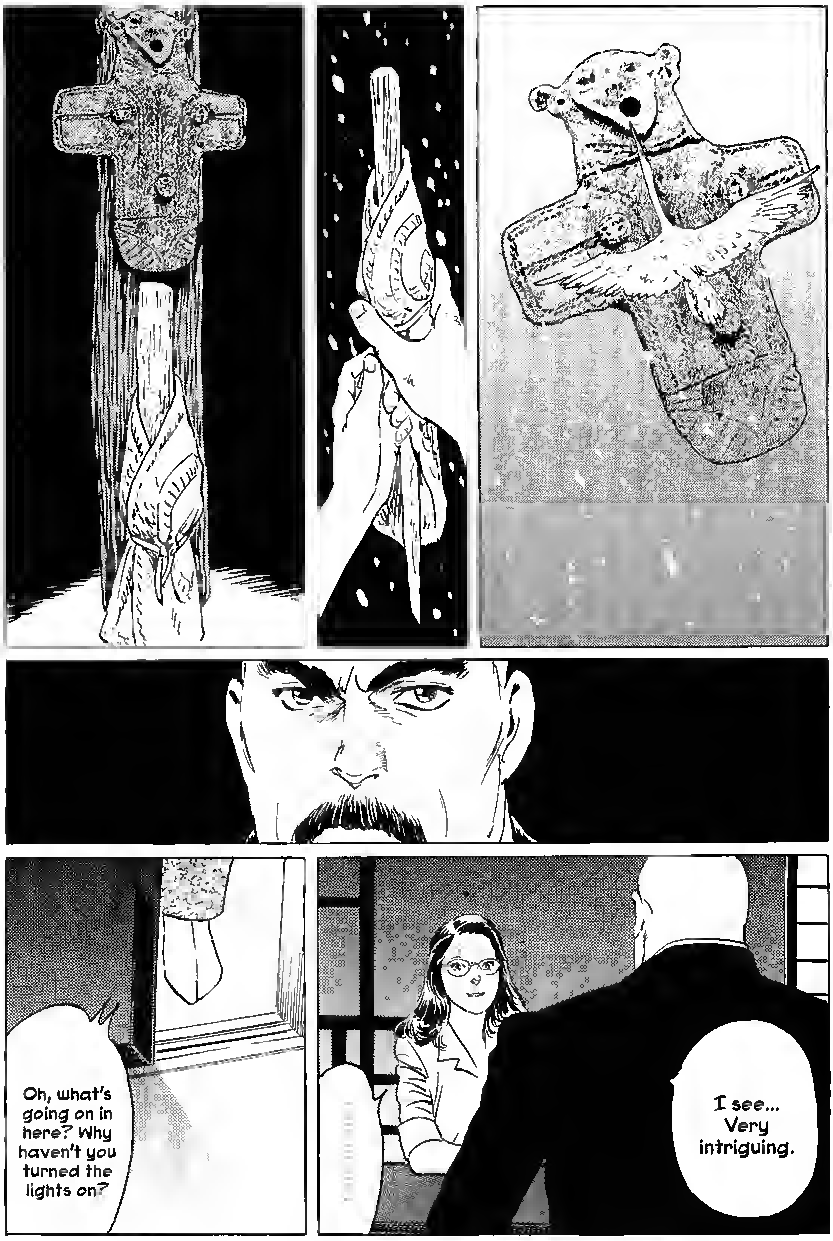
Aaaaaah
Ahhhhhhh..
AH!
AH!
AH...
Birds were believed to be the incarnations of souls. And if the dead were eaten by birds, they could ascend to Heaven on their wings...!


That is why the higher the burial, the better... Because the closer to Heaven and to the Sun, the sooner the soul could be with the gods!
And the giant trees were thought to be the mediators... The pillars of life that tie Heaven to Earth!

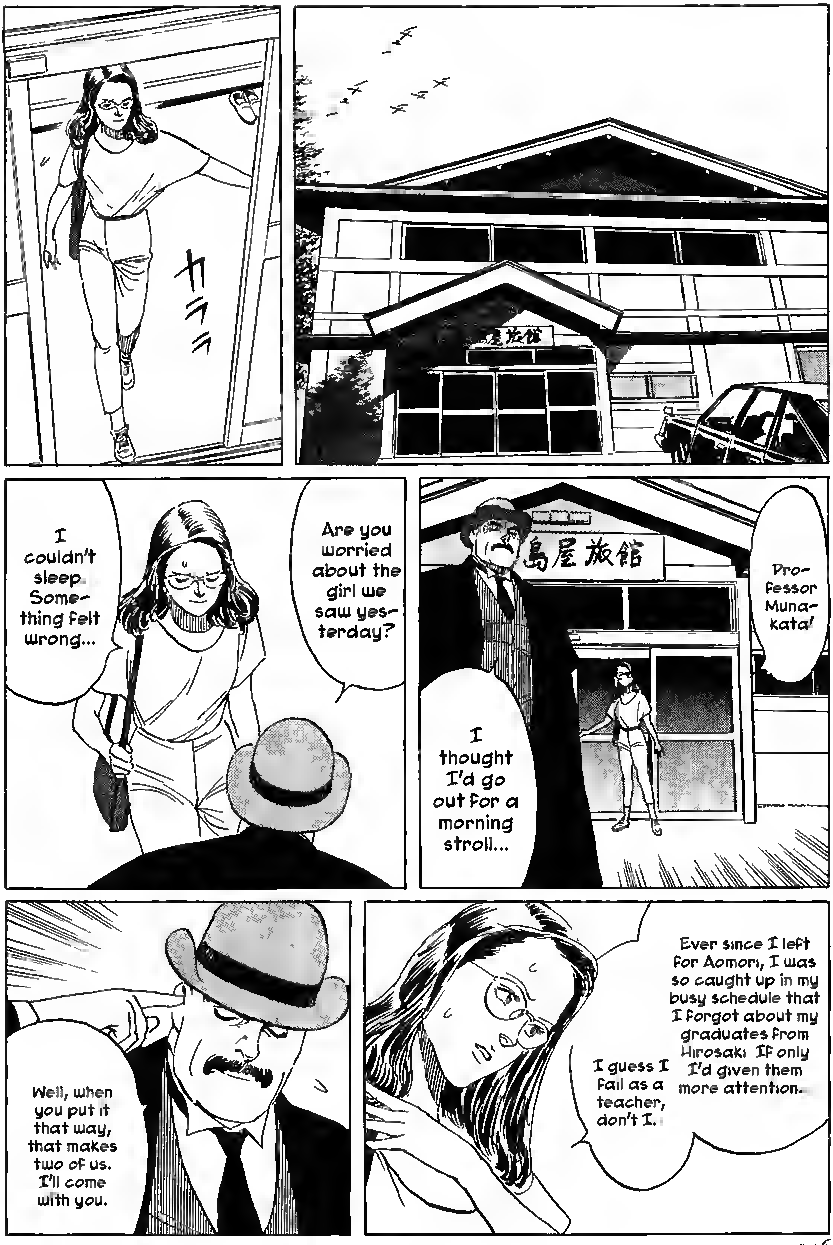
WAAAAAAAAAUU UUUGGGHHHHH!
Ah...
Ahh... Ahhh- hhhhh...
HUFF... HUFF...

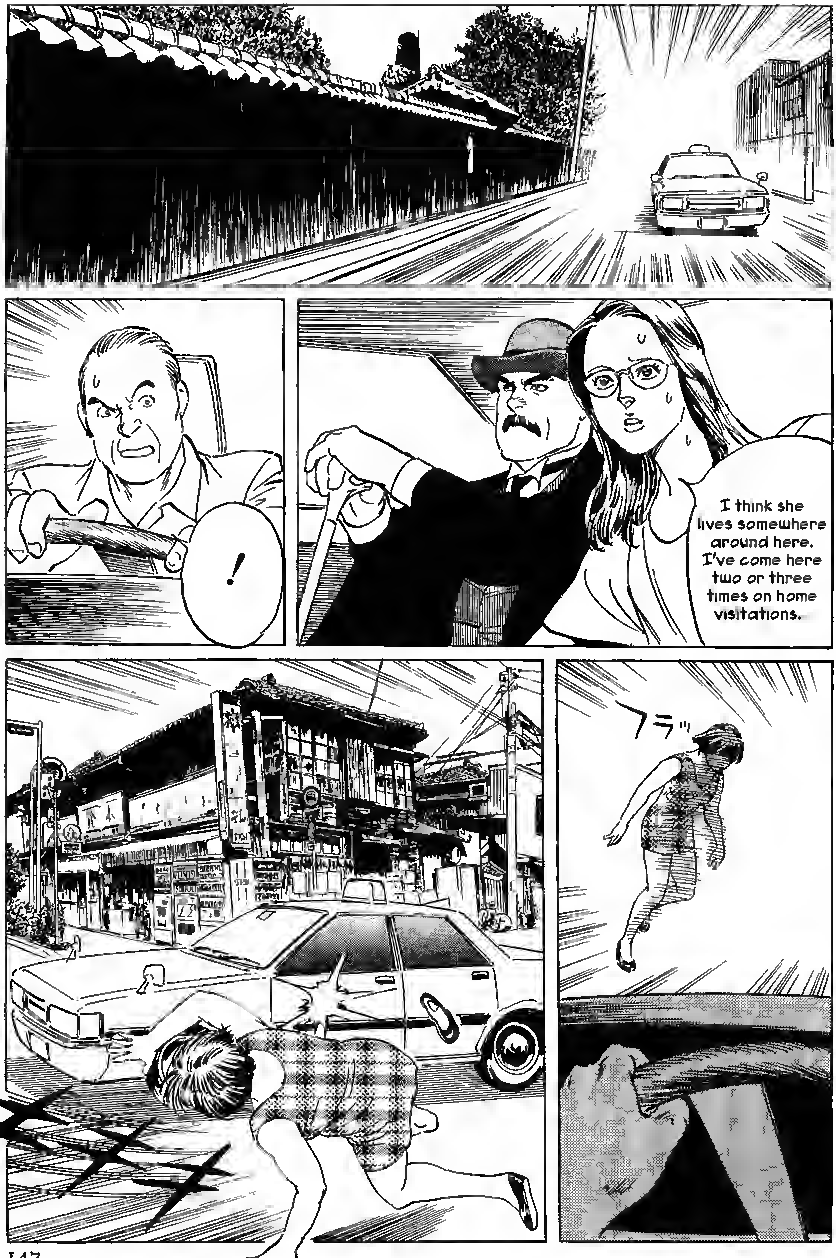
CHILDREN !?
Professor Munakata, what if the Oshirasama represented the spirits of children....!?
AUUU GGHH HHH... A... AUUU UUGG HHH...
In ancient times, when the infant death rate was higher, the sorrow of parents who lost their children must have served as the energy to raise those pillars
I've had that feeling for some time now. The Kamiasobase, letting them play with living children.

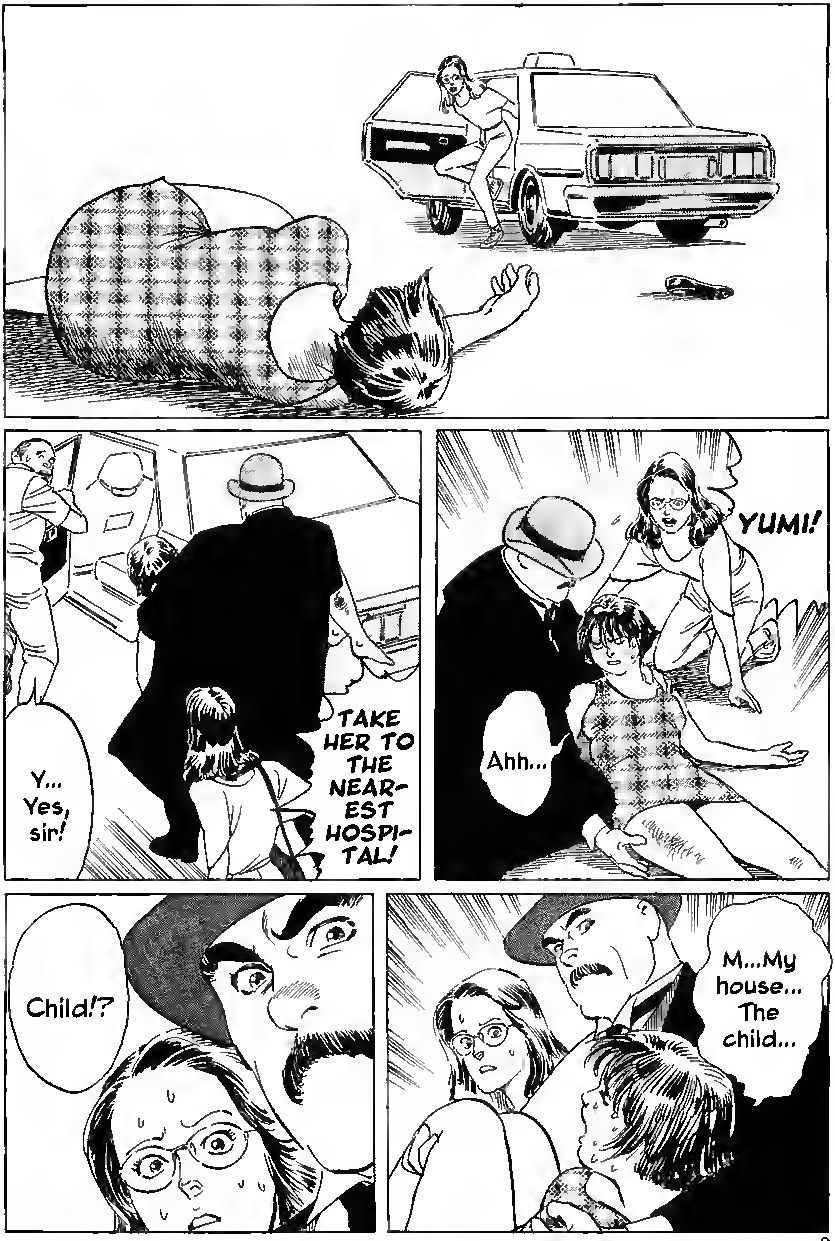

They sent the spirit to Heaven and the bones to the Earth... All while praying they may be reborn as a new life...
And they cut a piece of wood from the pillars representing their child, to ease the mothers' pain...

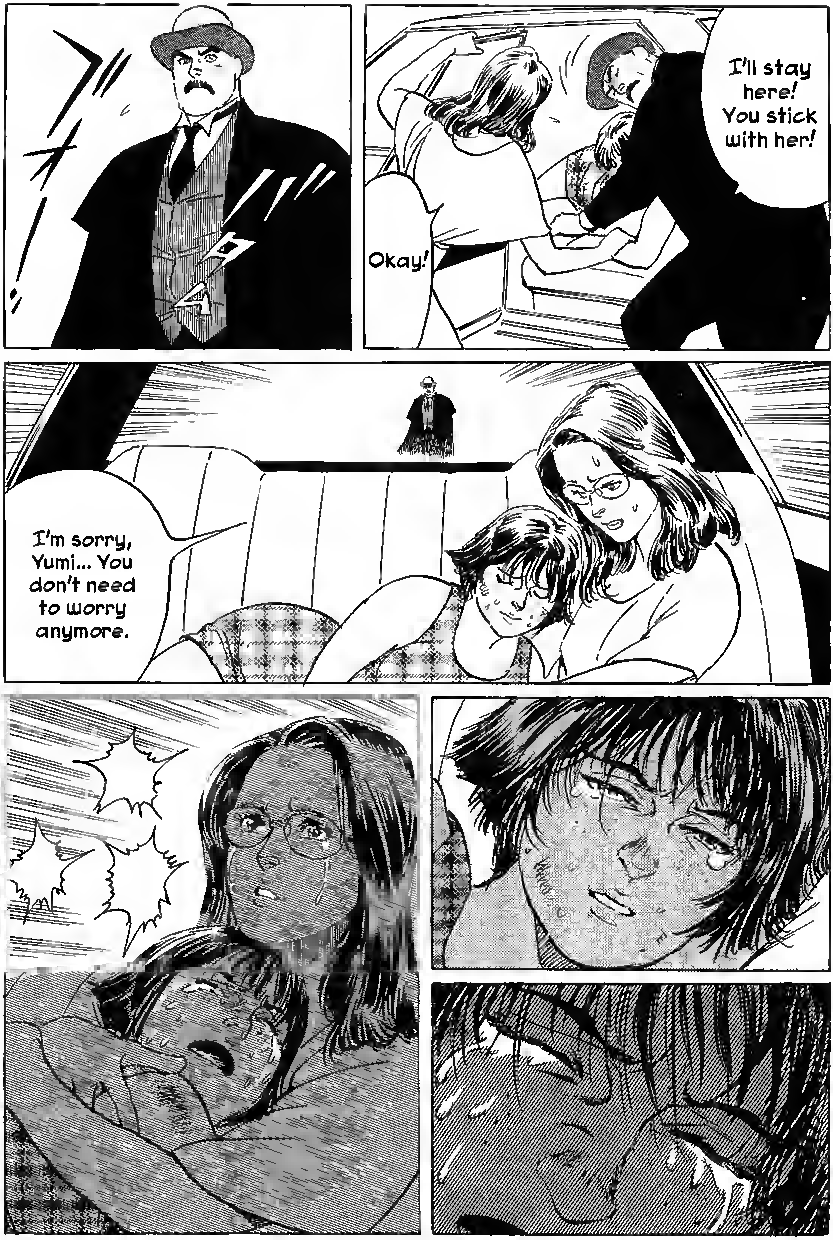

Oh, what's going on in here? Why haven't you turned the lights on?
I see... Very intriguing.

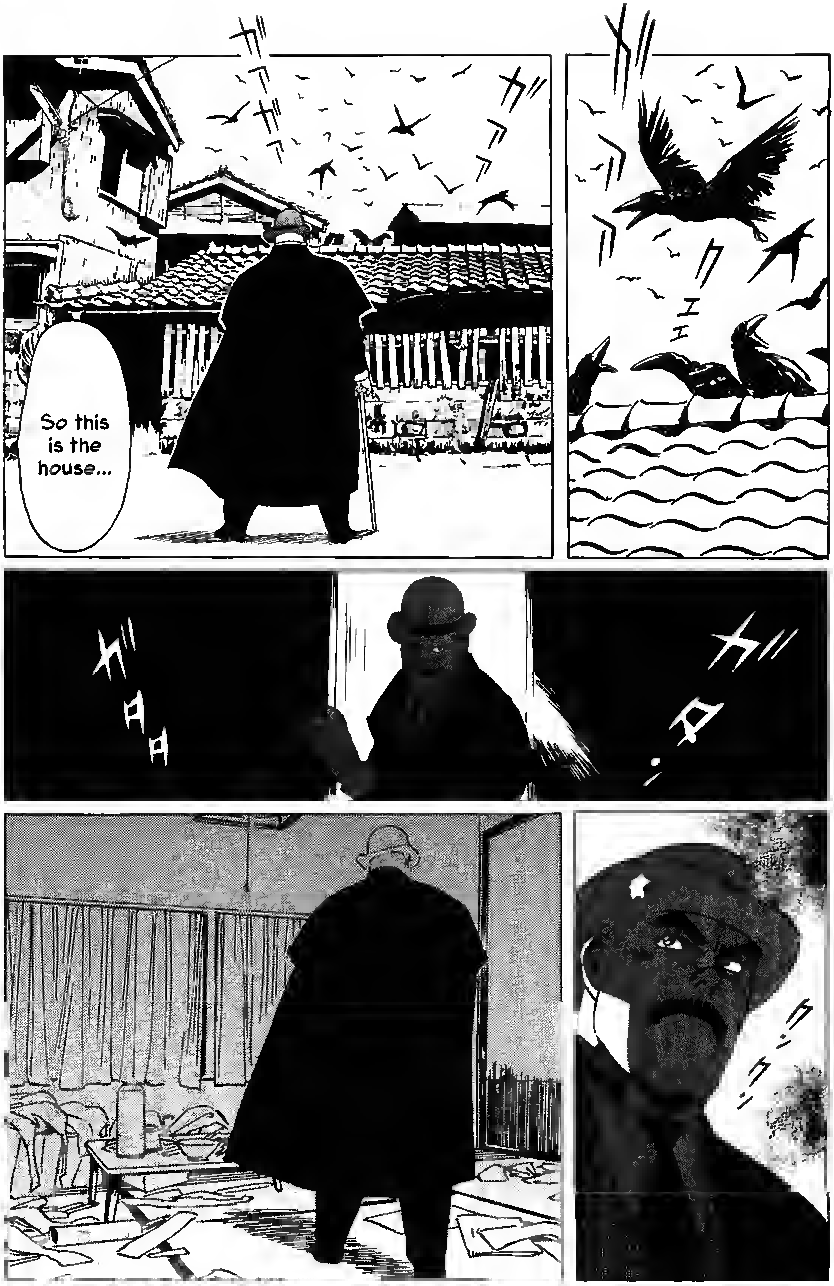
I was just admiring Ryoko's speculations. They are quite impressive.
Oh, please, Professor!
I'm sorry my daughter isn't more tactful, Professor. I'll bring your food right away.
Oh, not at all, Ma'am!
Oh, Ryoko, speaking of that Yumi girl...
After she graduated from middle school, she had to work to support her ill parents. And that was real hard on her.
Here you go.
And she moved around from job to job, and I heard ill rumors that she was toyed around by countless men...
Then when they died, she was left with their debt.

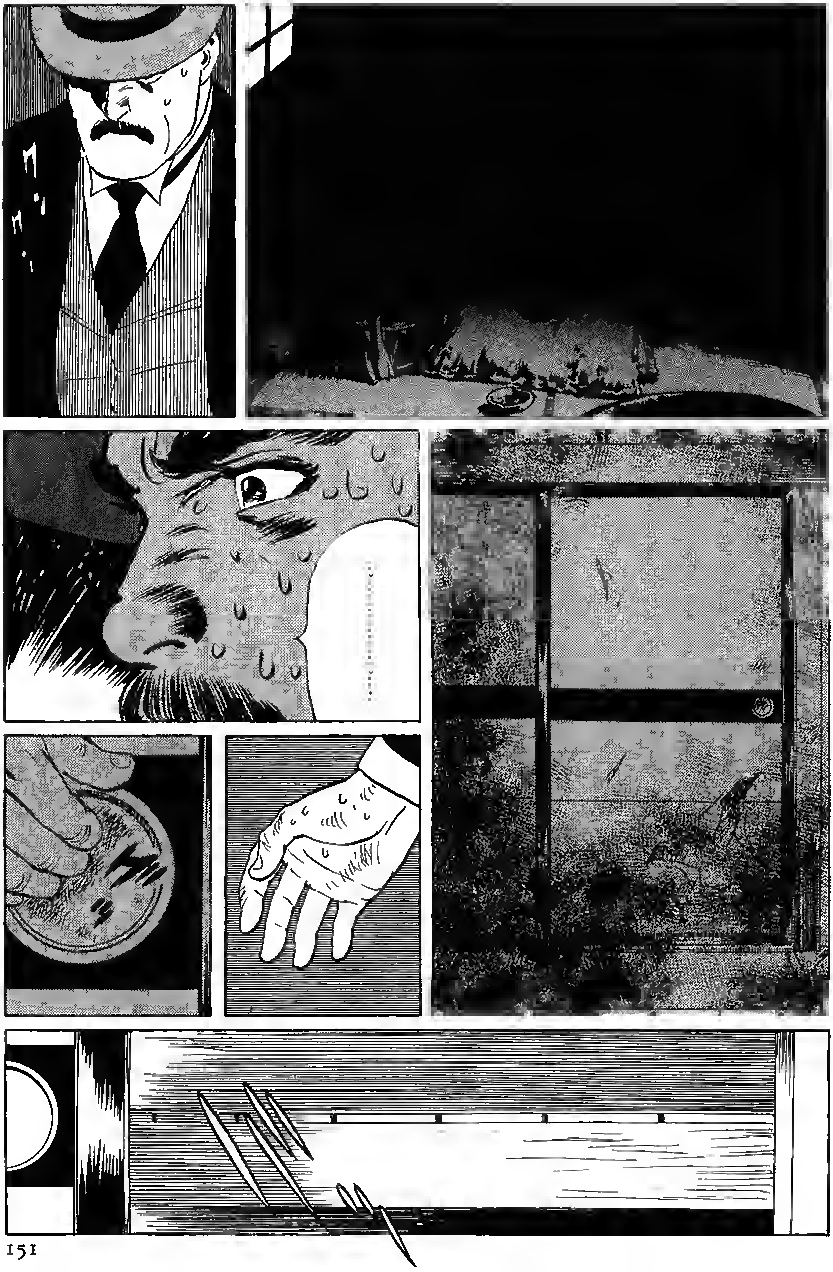

カラカラ
旅館
Are you worried about the girl we saw yesterday?
I couldn't sleep. Something felt wrong...
烏屋旅館
Professor Munakata!
I thought I'd go out for a morning stroll...
Well, when you put it that way, that makes two of us. I'll come with you.
I guess I fail as a teacher, don't I.
Ever since I left for Aomori, I was so caught up in my busy schedule that I forgot about my graduates from Hirosaki. If only I'd given them more attention.

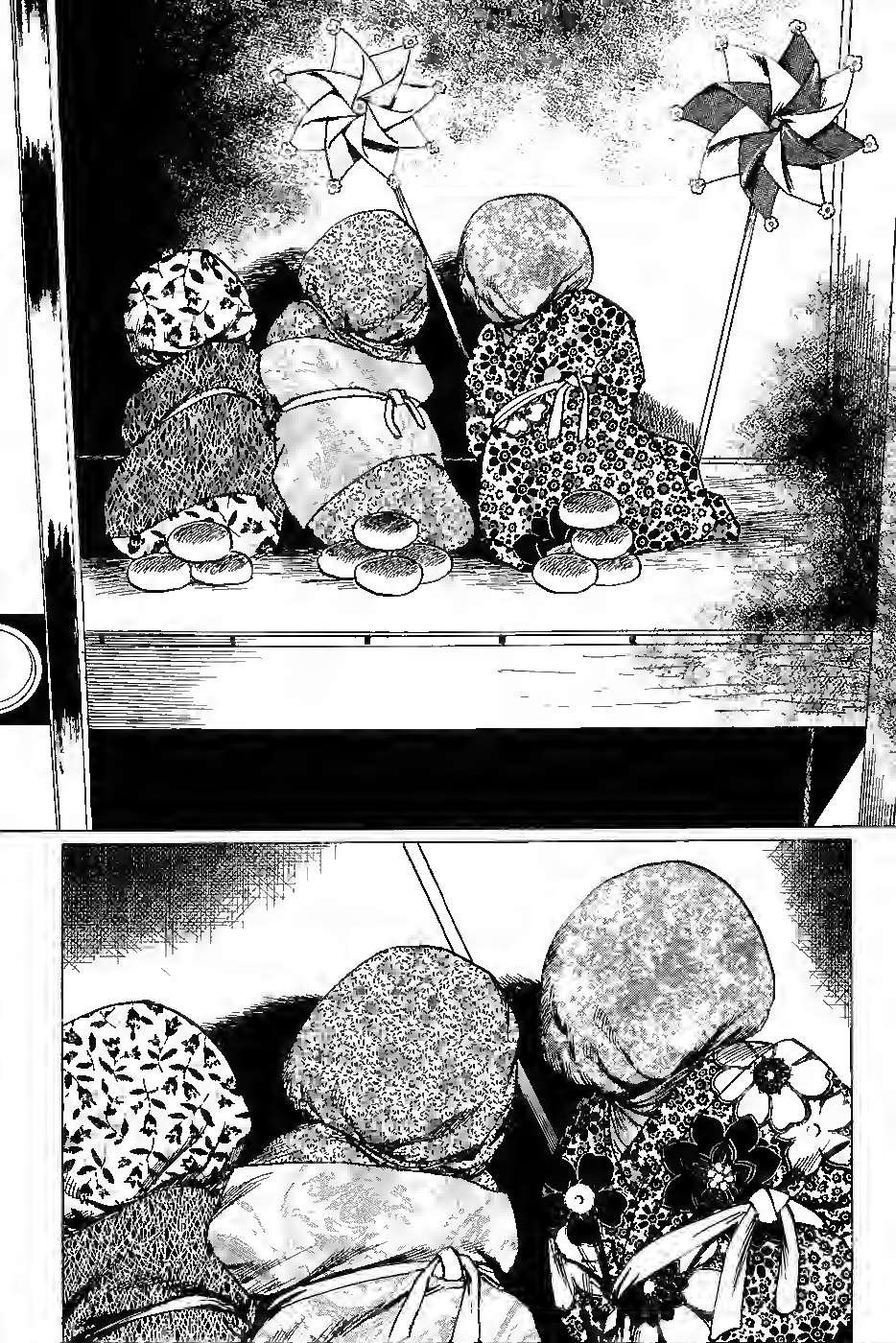

!
I think she lives somewhere around here. I've come here two or three times on home visitations.
フラ

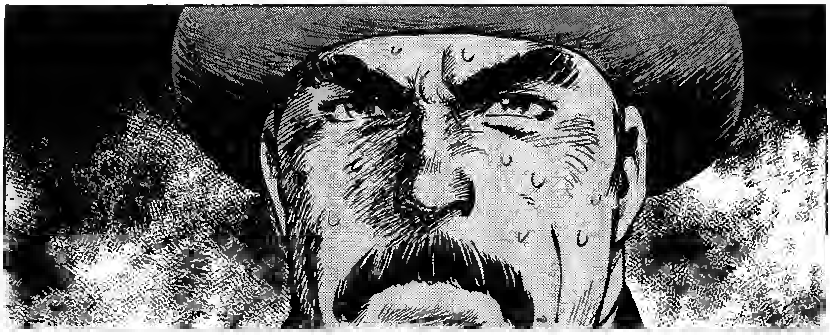

YUMI!
Ahh...
TAKE HER TO THE NEAREST HOSPITAL!
Y... Yes, sir!
M...My house... The child...
Child!?

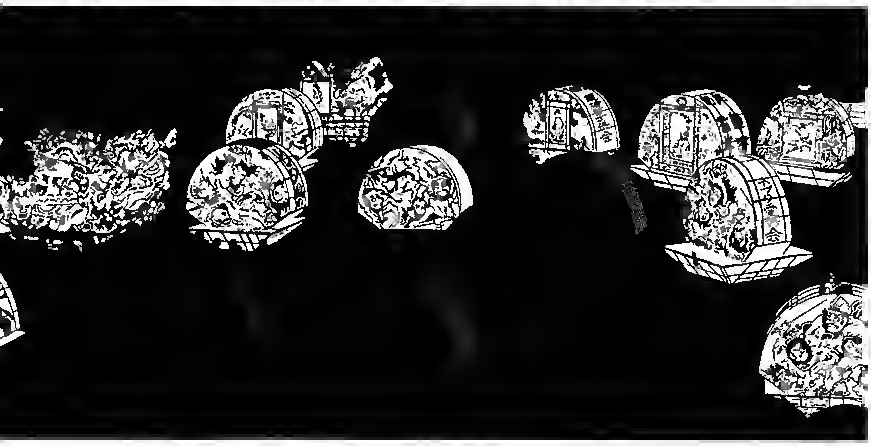

I'll stay here! You stick with her!
Okay!
I'm sorry, Yumi... You don't need to worry anymore.

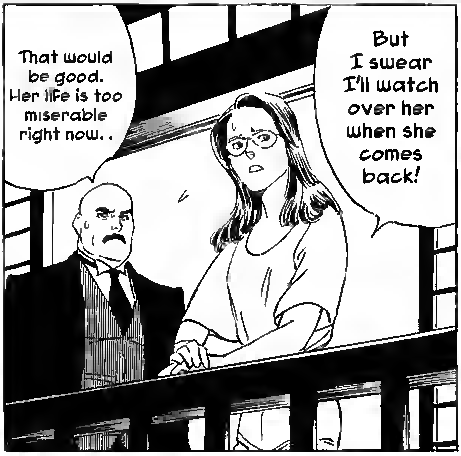

So this is the house...



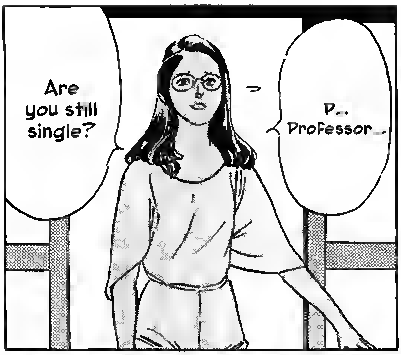


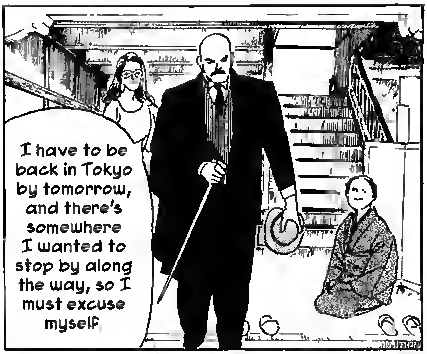


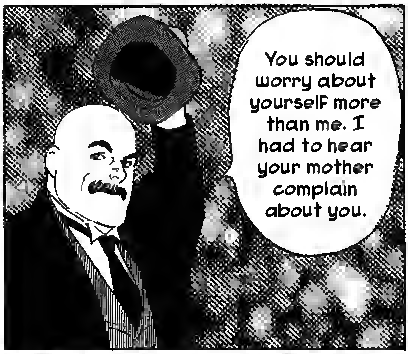


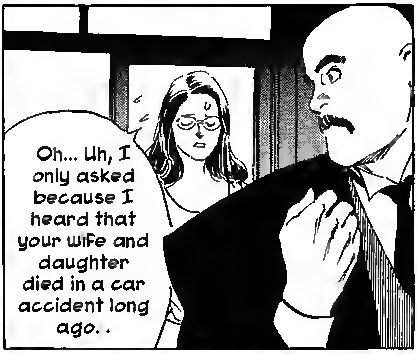

That would be good. Her life is too miserable right now..
But I swear I'll watch over her when she comes back!

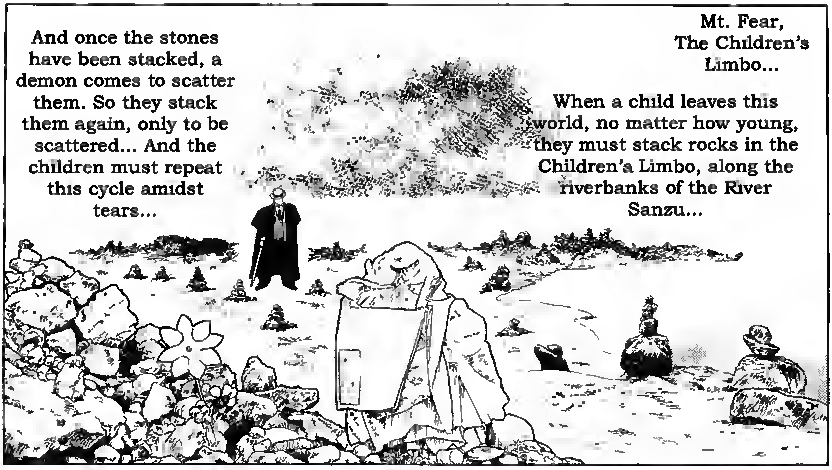
She may have to serve some form of sentence...

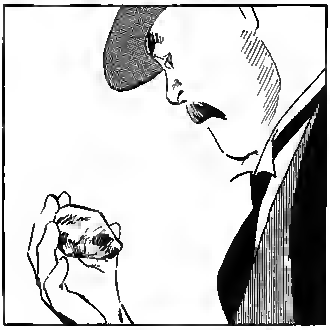

Are you still single?
P... Professor...

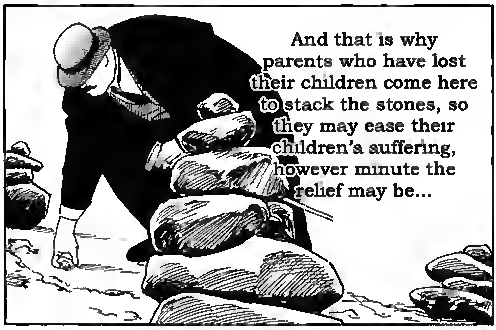

I have to be back in Tokyo by tomorrow, and there's somewhere I wanted to stop by along the way, so I must excuse myself.

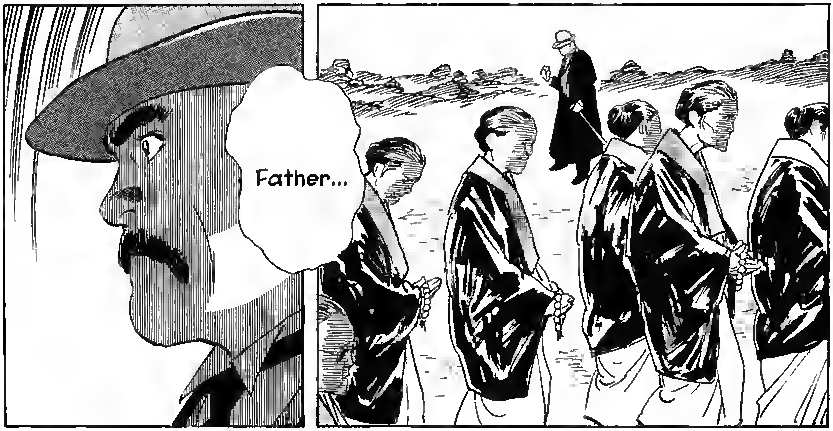

You should worry about yourself more than me. I had to hear your mother complain about you.


Oh... Uh, I only asked because I heard that your wife and daughter died in a car accident long ago..


Mt. Fear,
The Children's
Limbo...
When a child leaves this world, no matter how young, they must stack rocks in the Children's Limbo, along the riverbanks of the River Sanzu...
And once the stones have been stacked, a demon comes to scatter them. So they stack them again, only to be scattered... And the children must repeat this cycle amidst tears...




And that is why parents who have lost their children come here to stack the stones, so they may ease their children's suffering, however minute the relief may be...

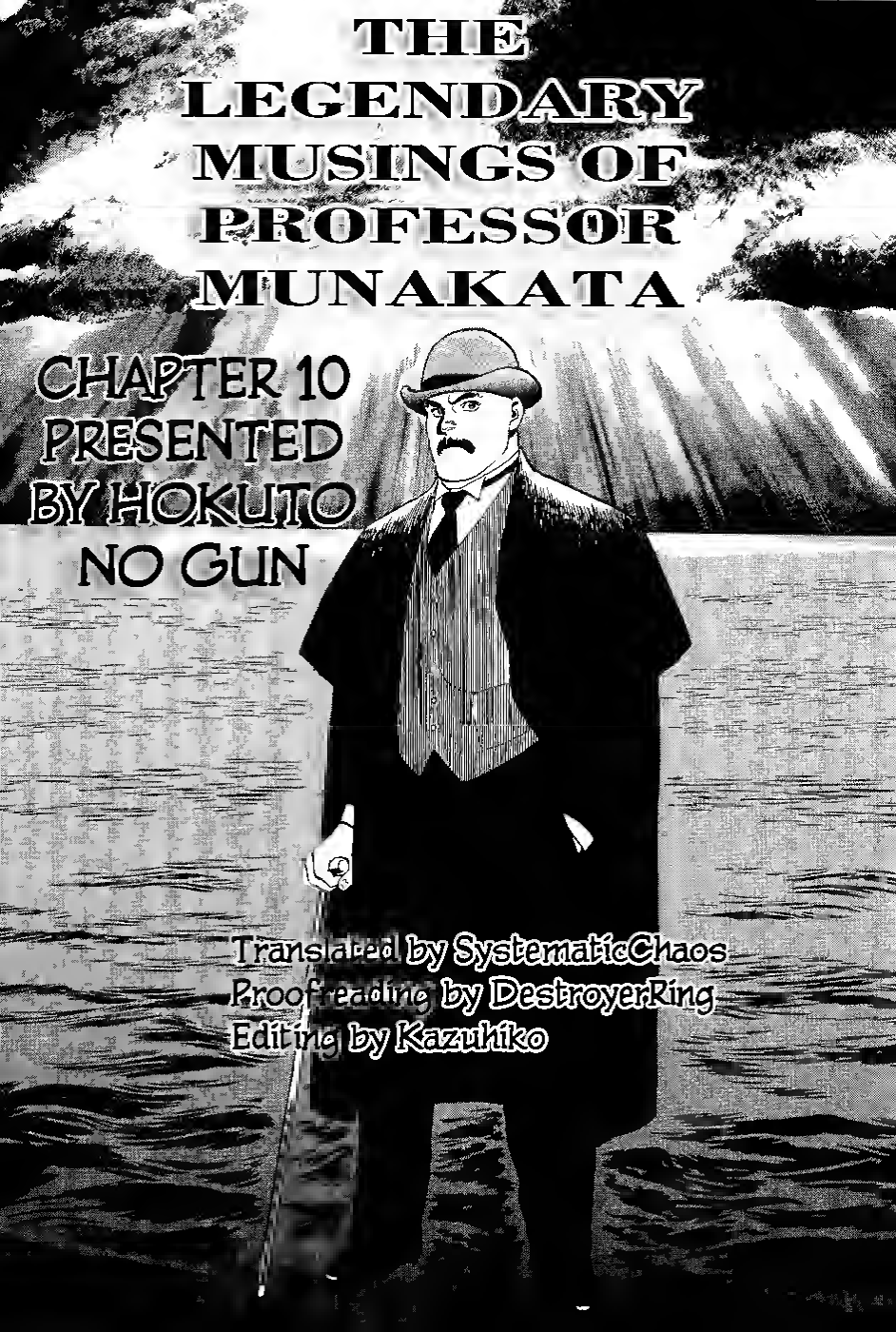

Father...

You can forget about us now, Father...

THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

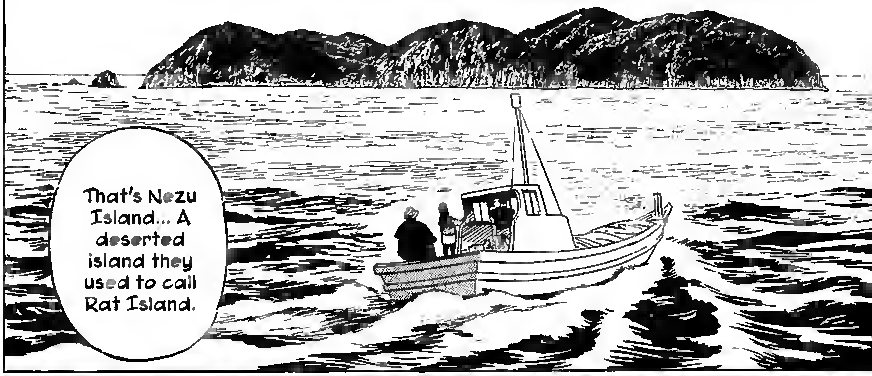
CHAPTER 10

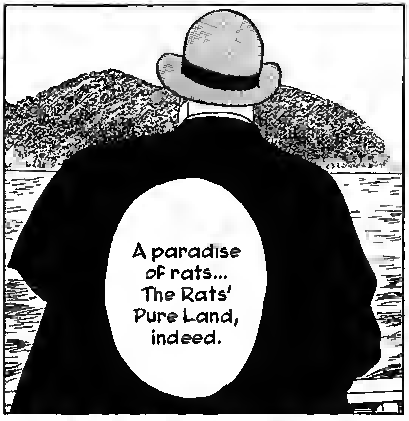
PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN

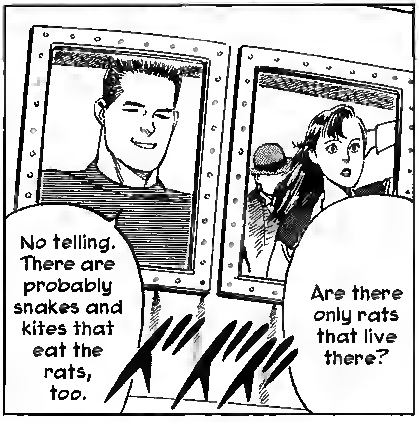


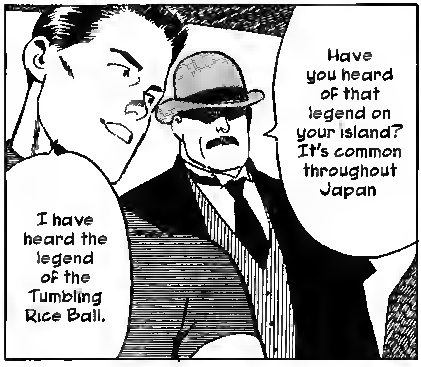
Translated by SystematicChaos
Proofreading by DestroyerRing
Editing by Kazuhiko

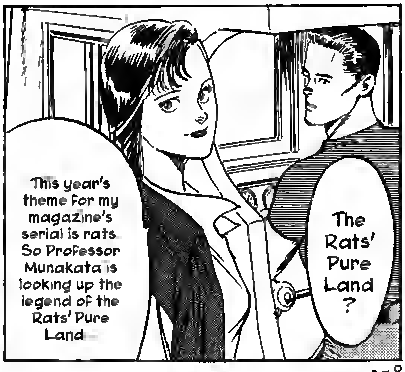
NO. 11: THE RATS' PURE LAND


That's Nezu Island... A deserted island they used to call Rat Island.

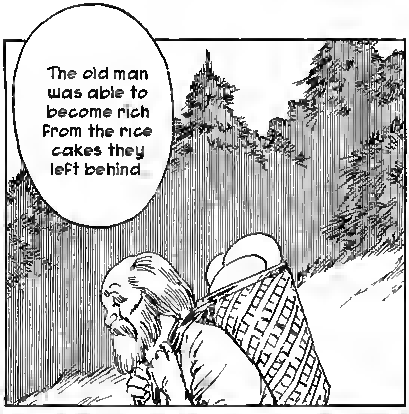

A paradise of rats... The Rats' Pure Land, indeed.

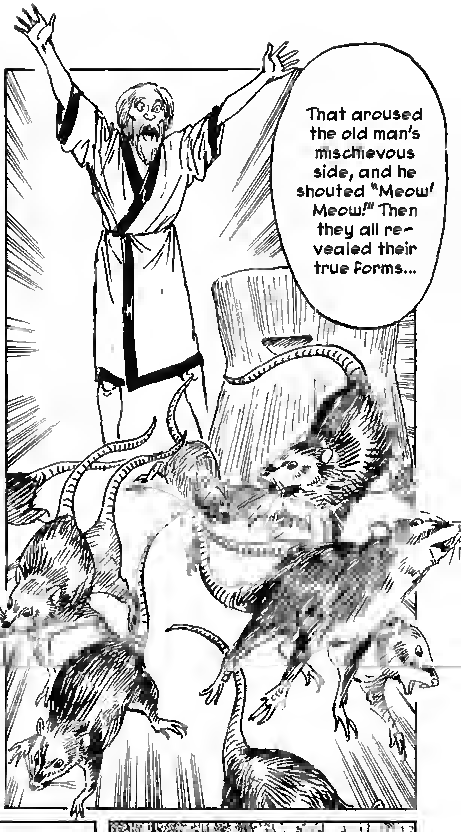

No telling. There are probably snakes and kites that eat the rats, too.
Are there only rats that live there?

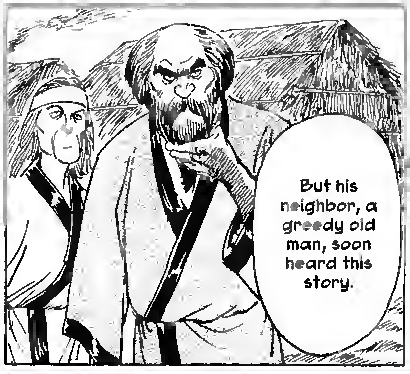

Have you heard of that legend on your island? It's common throughout Japan
I have heard the legend of the Tumbling Rice Ball.


This year's theme for my magazine's serial is rats. So Professor Munakata is looking up the legend of the Rats' Pure Land.
The Rats' Pure Land?

Yes, that's it. For instance, it goes like this in the folklore of the Ainu of Hokkaido.
An old man who lived in a poor house went into the mountains to chop wood, bringing with him a ball of rice for lunch.
But when noon came and he was about to eat the ball of rice, it rolled away from him.
It kept rolling and rolling into a deep, deep hole.
And what should he find there but a large mansion, in which a great crowd was pounding rice happily.
They chanted, "Pound the rice, and run if you hear the meow!" "Pound the rice, and run if you hear the meow!"


The old man was able to become rich from the rice cakes they left behind.


That aroused the old man's mischievous side, and he shouted "Meow! Meow!" Then they all revealed their true forms...


But his neighbor, a greedy old man, soon heard this story.

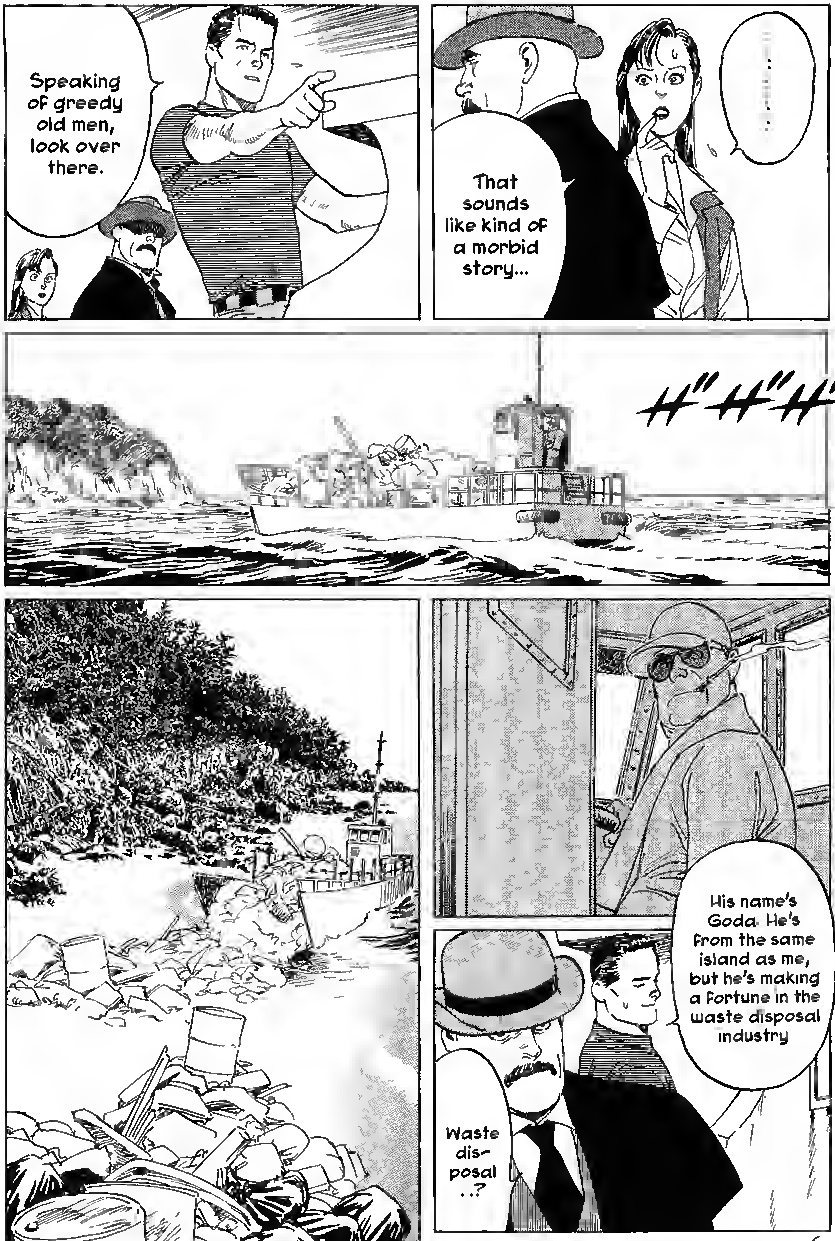
Then he gathered the rice cakes, as he sneered at the fleeing mice.
He found them pounding the rice, so he shouted "Meow! Meow!"

He went into the mountains and dropped a rice ball on purpose, so that he could get rich himself.

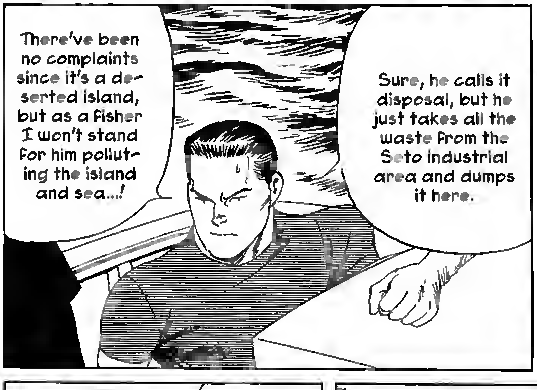
But due to his greedy nature, he gathered too many rice cakes, and could not carry them out of the cave

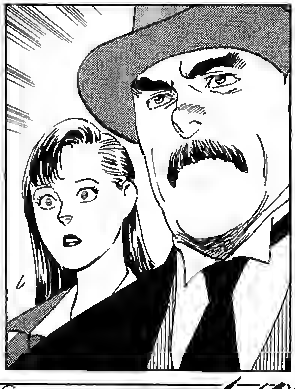
But it was no red garment...

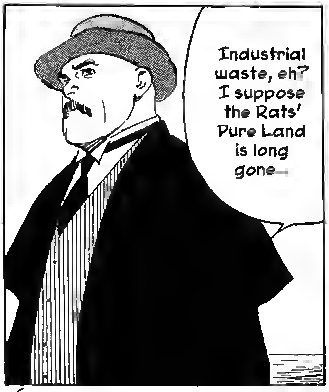
His old wife, who was just as greedy as him, was overjoyed to see her husband coming from a distance
To her, it seemed as though her husband had donned an expensive red garment, dancing for joy as he carried heaps of money

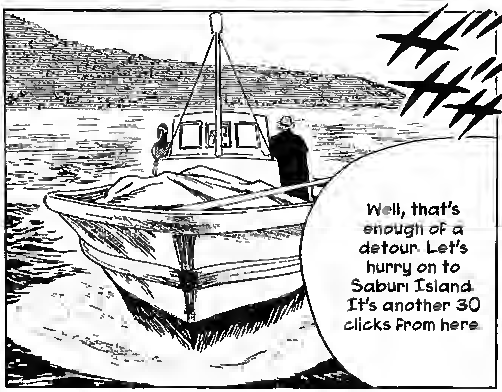

Speaking of greedy old men, look over there.
That sounds like kind of a morbid story...
H"H"H"
His name's Goda. He's from the same island as me, but he's making a fortune in the waste disposal industry
Waste dis-posal ..?

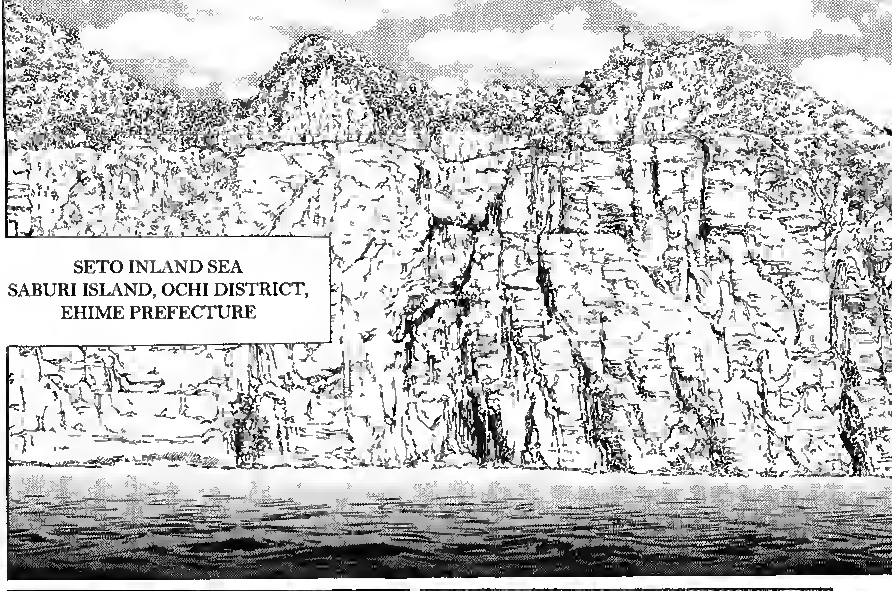
ゴゴゴ

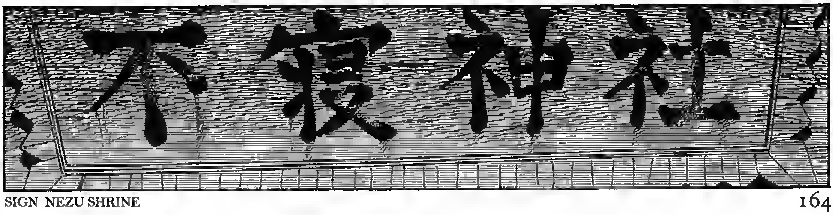

There've been no complaints since it's a deserted island, but as a fisher I won't stand for him polluting the island and sea...!
Sure, he calls it disposal, but he just takes all the waste from the Seto industrial area and dumps it here.



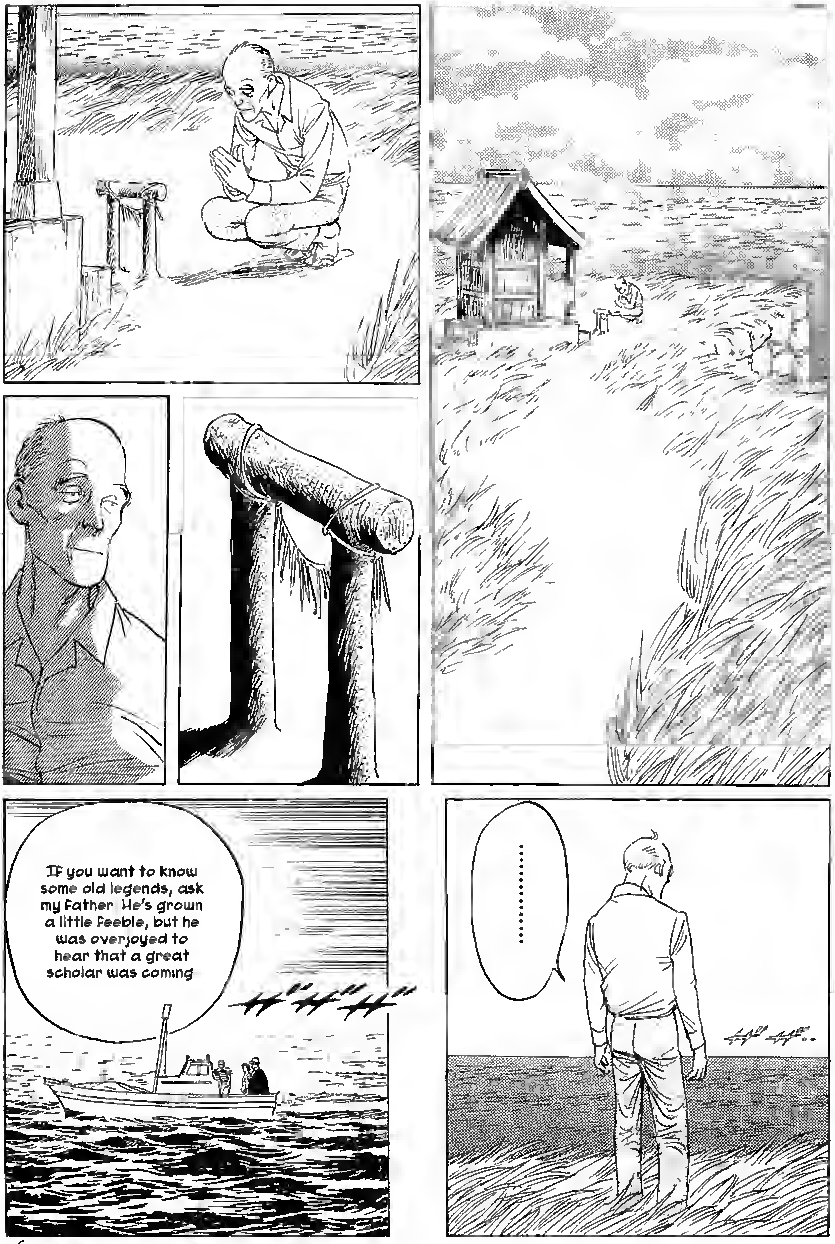

Industrial waste, eh? I suppose the Rats' Pure Land is long gone...

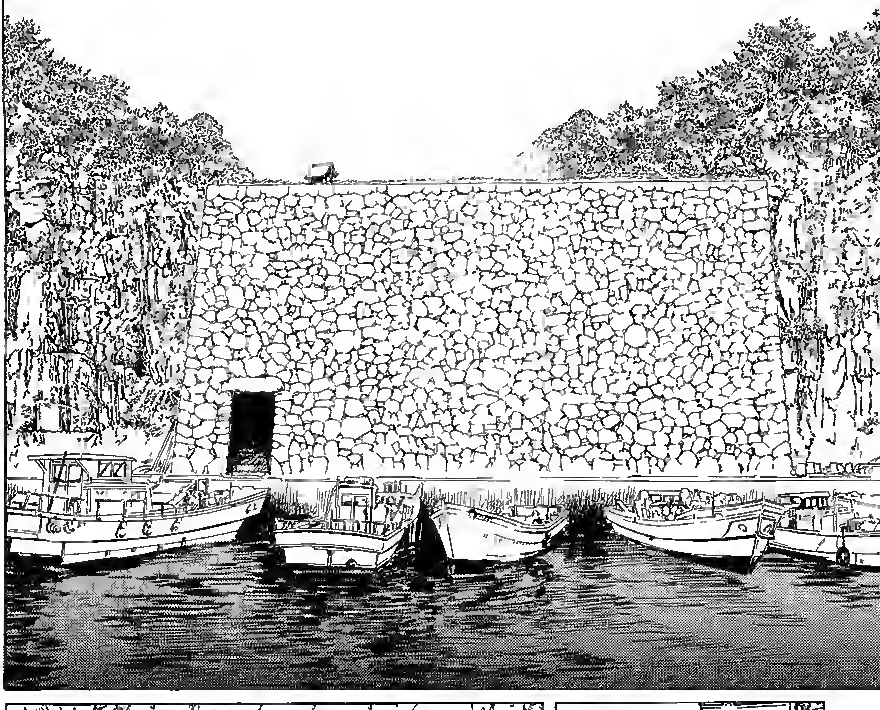

Well, that's enough of a detour. Let's hurry on to Saburi Island. It's another 30 clicks from here.

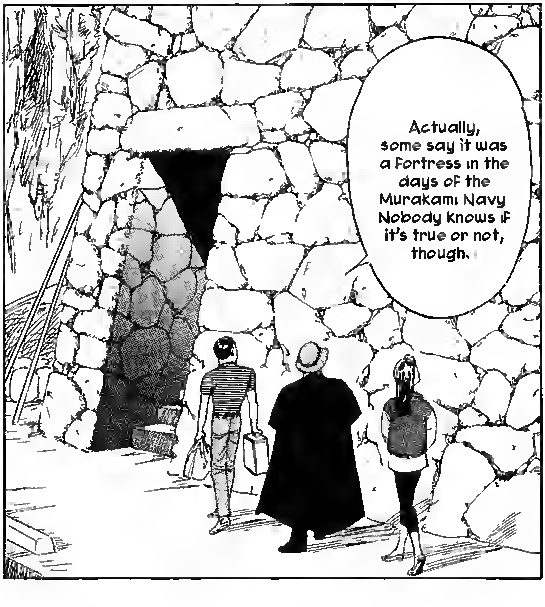




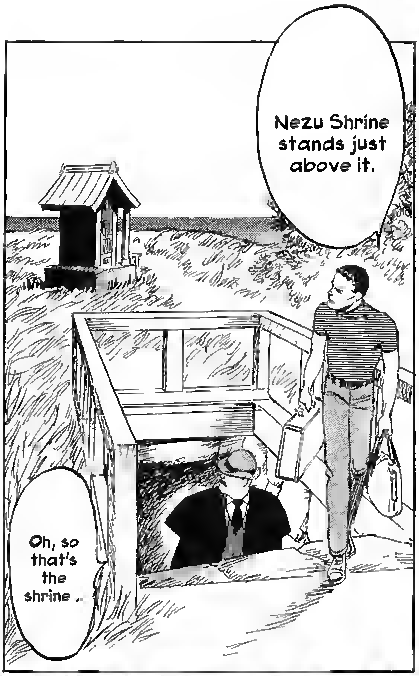
SIGN NEZU SHRINE


If you want to know some old legends, ask my Father. He's grown a little feeble, but he was overjoyed to hear that a great scholar was coming
.....




Actually, some say it was a fortress in the days of the Murakami Navy. Nobody knows if it's true or not, though.

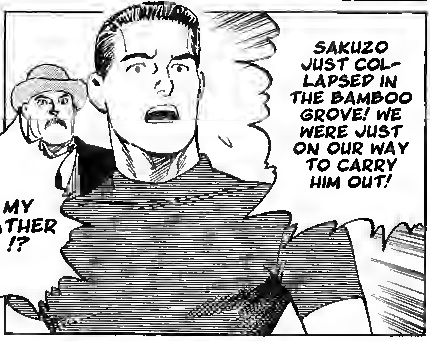
The island is surrounded by a sheer cliff, and the only harbor has a stone wall. It's almost a fortress.


Nezu Shrine stands just above it.
Oh, so that's the shrine.

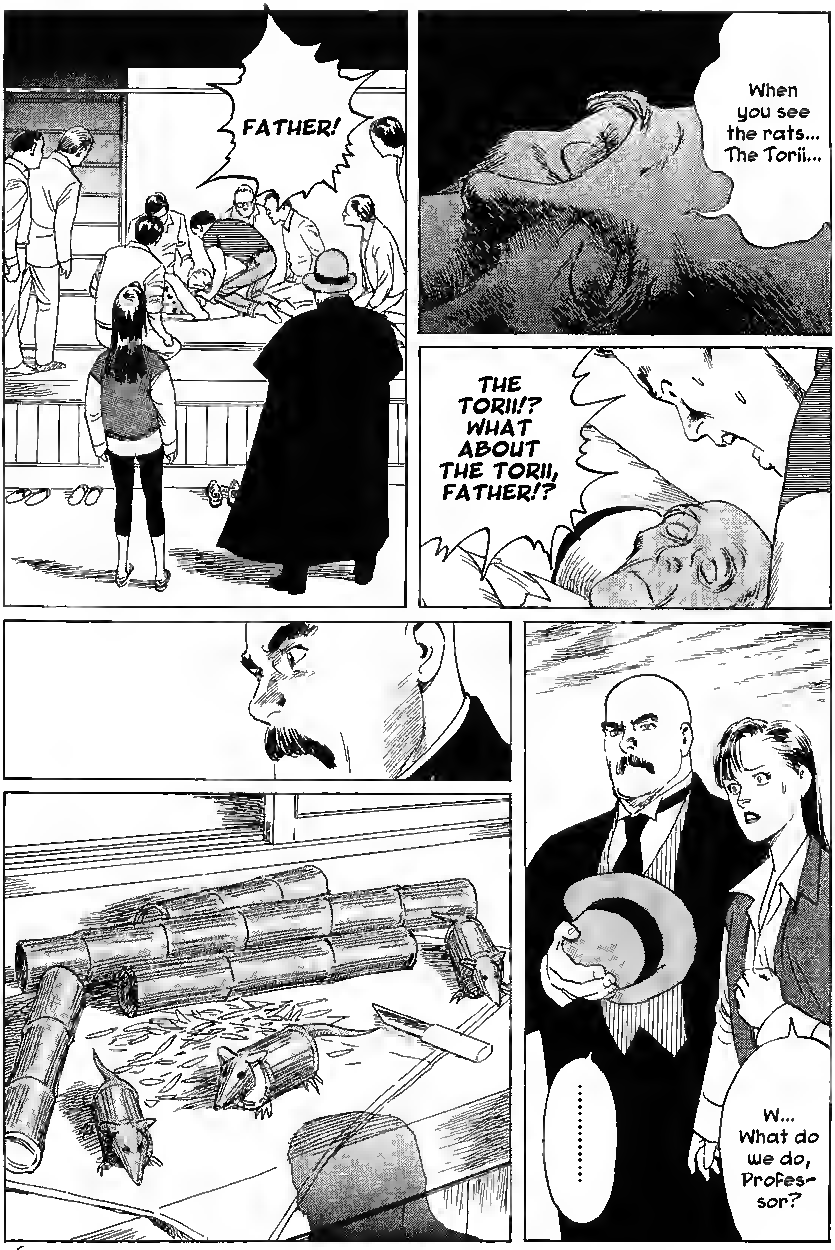
So this is the entrance to the island...?

MY FATHER!?

ICHIRO!


SAKUZO JUST COLLAPSED IN THE BAMBOO GROVE! WE WERE JUST ON OUR WAY TO CARRY HIM OUT!

The flowers have blossomed. The bamboo-grass flowers.
FATHER! I TOLD YOU NOT TO PUSH YOUR-SELF!
Bamboo-grass flowers?
And when the bamboo-grass flowers blossom, the rats spring forth.

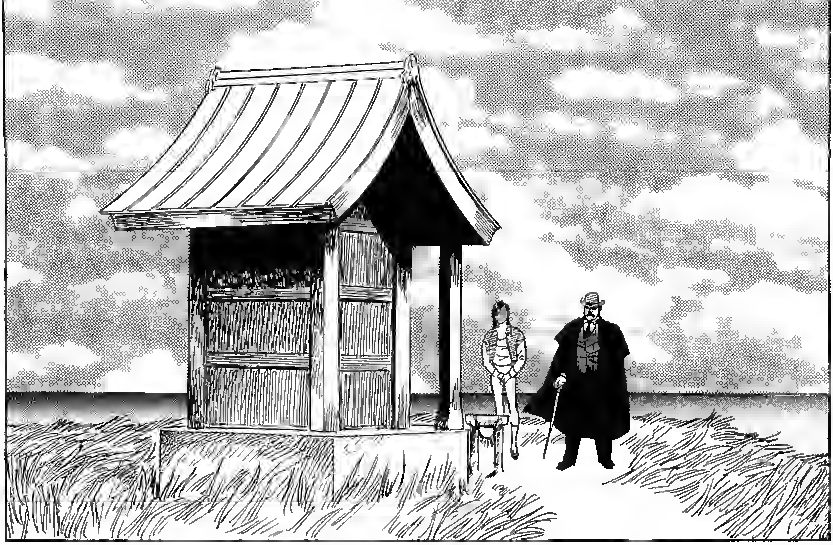

FATHER!
When you see the rats... The Torii...
THE TORII!? WHAT ABOUT THE TORII, FATHER!?
W... What do we do, Professor?

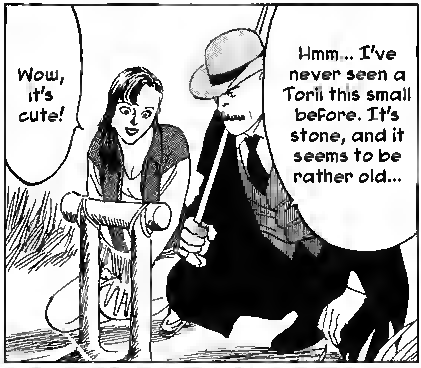
Are you sure?
I want you to stay at my house like we planned, regardless of what happened
Was your father a bamboo-crafter?
Yes. They'll hold the funeral service at the town hall. I'm sorry I can't offer you any hospitality
Well, thank you
.....
Yes...
He took it up as a pastime after he retired from fishing, and he's sold them as souvenirs in Shikoku...
シャッ!

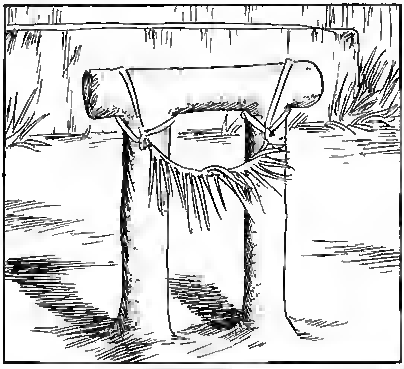
Oh, Ike's fine. This happens all the time.
More importantly, do you see rats often?
No, hardly ever...
T...Then again, it's not like seeing a rat or two on this island is all that strange...

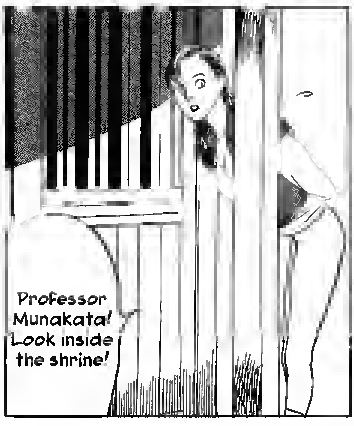
Hey, Ichiro. Sorry for your loss.
Hate to say, but I can't make it to the funeral or the wake. I'm just too busy with work...
Well, it's good to see that business is booming...
You'll never get anywhere in life if you keep on fishing in your father's old worn-down boat...
Sure is. I'm considering buying another boat.
You wanna help me out, Ichiro? There's good money in it.

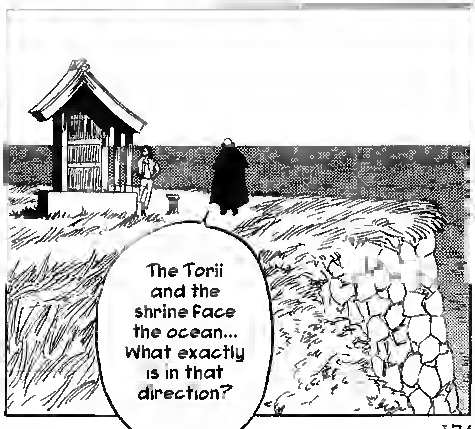
I knew the late Sakuzo was an eccentric who'd look out to sea whenever he had the time! I guess the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree!
IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE FUNERAL COMING UP, I'D MAKE YOU TAKE THAT BACK, GODA! I'D RATHER RIDE A WORN-DOWN BOAT THAN BE KNEE-DEEP IN TRASH!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH BEING KNEE-DEEP IN TRASH AND MAKING MONEY? I'LL MAKE ALL THE MONEY I WANT!
YOU'RE JUST CLINGING TO THE ISLAND AND THE SEA!




Wow, it's cute!
Hmm... I've never seen a Torii this small before. It's stone, and it seems to be rather old...

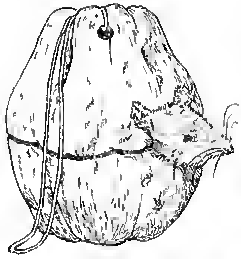



Professor Munakata! Look inside the shrine!

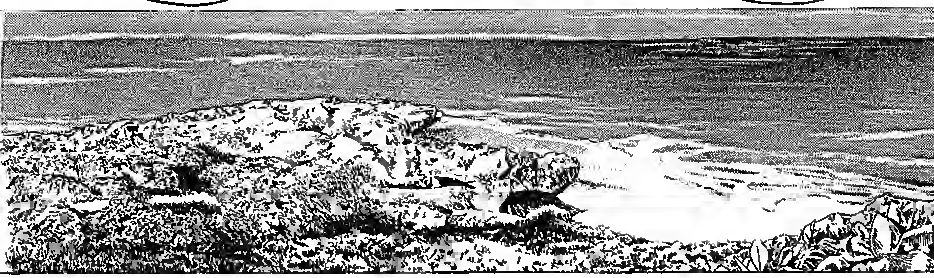

The Torii and the shrine face the ocean... What exactly is in that direction?

The root... "Ne"! I see now...
It looks like an ordinary tree root. Is that the object of worship?
"Ne" stands for "Ne no Kuni" The Underworld. At the same time, it is a homophone to the "Ne" from "Nedoshi"... The Year of the Rat!
Taboo word?
It's a taboo word.
Do you understand? Same goes for the name Nezu Shrine. Everything is a reference to rats, though they avoid saying it straight out!
This Torii is not for humans.
They feared rats!
Yes. It was taboo to use the word "rat".

This is because Otojikyo was regarded as a messenger from the pure land across the sea, Niraikanai, or even as their ancestral spirit.



For instance, in Okinawa, a rat god named Otojikyo would ravage crops, but to appease him, they merely had to capture rats and send them out to sea.

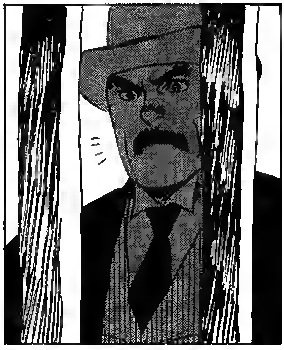


The tradition that if the name of the rats was uttered, but not in a whisper, it would be heard by the rat above the ceiling, existed until just recently.

Ohh...

Even in mainland Japan, they had a belief in the Land of Tokoyo

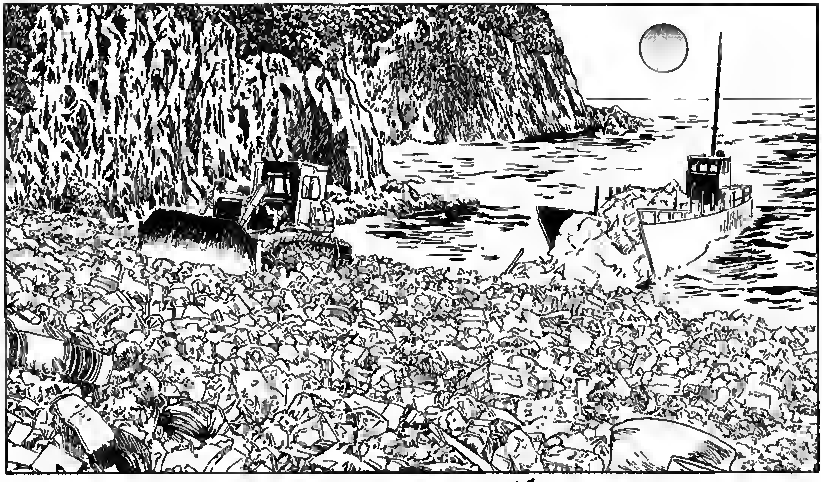
Rats, too, were feared, and were called by taboo words such as Yomesama, or Ofukusan, or even Uenoanesama

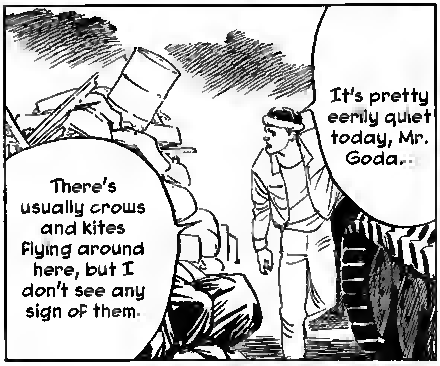


The conclusion to the Rats' Pure Land may have been an expression of that fear.

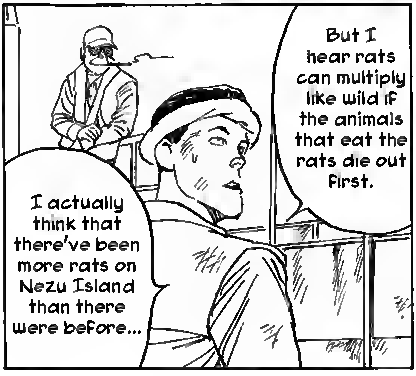
Even the tiniest rats bear dreadful power...

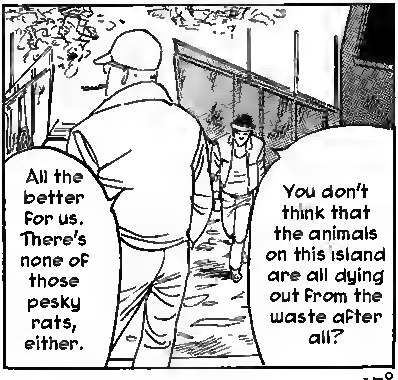
So does that mean that Nezu Shrine is actually "Rat Shrine"? How exactly did they worship the rat god...?
Good question... What prayers did they offer him...?
Rats are multipliers, after all. A couple of rats can become ten thousand in just a year.
AIII-EEEE!
That's none of your business!
Miss Ike, why don't you go pray for children in your future, unless your extreme dieting has caused you to develop anemia?
The Nezu Shrine in Tokyo is also known by the name Nezu Gongen, and there are many shrines called Neno Shrine in Kanto. These are most certainly Rat Shrine.



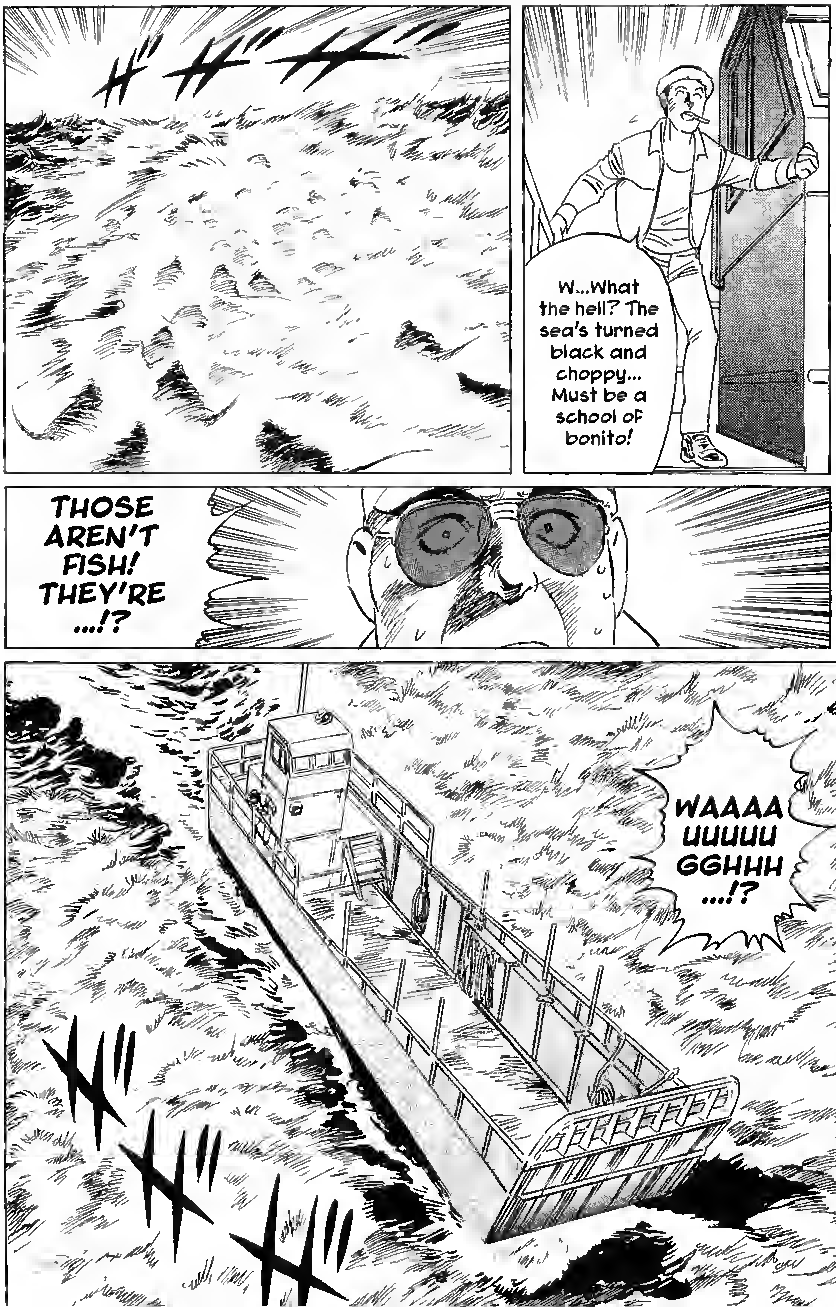

It's pretty eerily quiet today, Mr. Goda...
There's usually crows and kites flying around here, but I don't see any sign of them.

ゴオオ
Okay, that's it for today! Let's bring 'er in!


But I hear rats can multiply like wild if the animals that eat the rats die out first.
I actually think that there've been more rats on Nezu Island than there were before...


All the better for us. There's none of those pesky rats, either.
You don't think that the animals on this island are all dying out from the waste after all?

What do you think? This pays off far more than riding a fishing boat!
Yeah..
ドドドド
I'll make half of Saburi Island a landfill! That'll make those gossiping folk turn blue! Hehehe...
If this keeps up, we'll have no more space left on Nezu Island. And when that happens.
Kch! If we're really making so much, you should pay me a little more, you greedy old man!
ゴーゴーゴー
...Huh?


W...What the hell? The sea's turned black and choppy... Must be a school of bonito!
THOSE AREN'T FISH! THEY'RE ...!?
WAAAA UUUUU GGHHH ...!?

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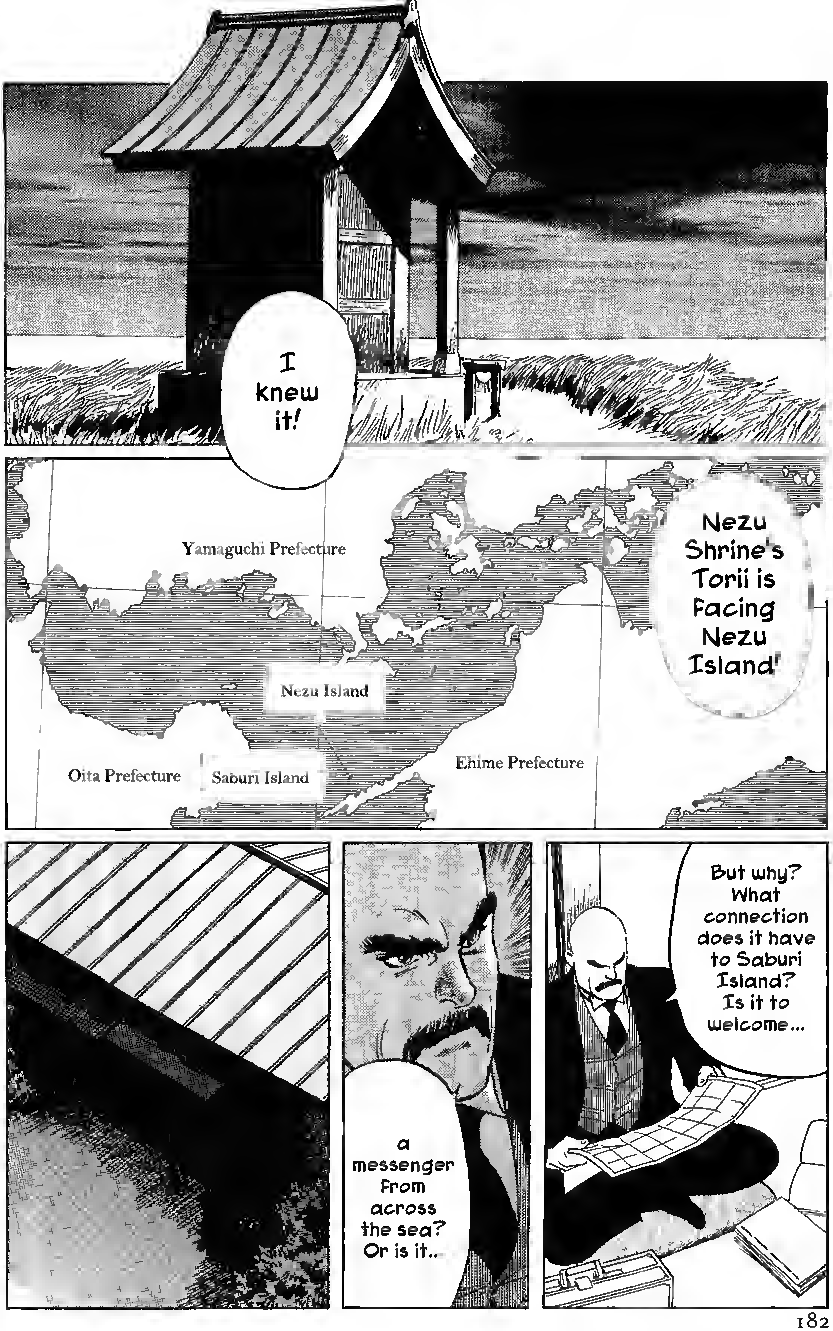
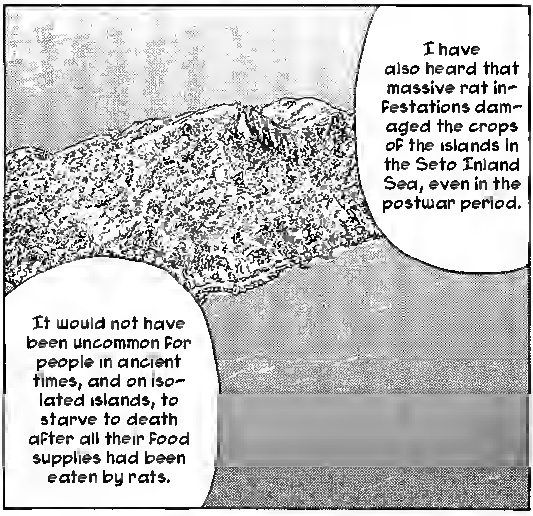
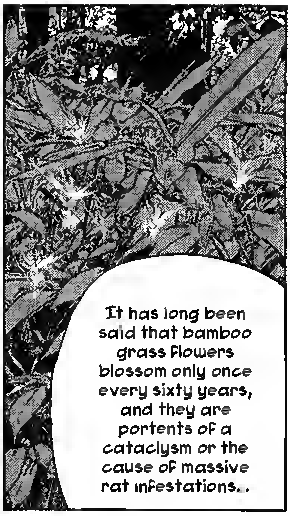

I knew it!
Yamaguchi Prefecture
Nezu Island
Oita Prefecture
Saburi Island
Ehime Prefecture
Nezu Shrine's Torii is Facing Nezu Island!
a messenger from across the sea? Or is it..
But why? What connection does it have to Saburi Island? Is it to welcome...

And this bookmark is placed in Tenna year 9... About three hundred years ago...
Hmm... Ike, it seems that the late Sakuzo gathered and preserved the archives of this island.
You forgot to turn the lights on, Professor!
The records stop there for a while... And this is what it says two years later.
The rats surged..?
"In the spring the bamboo grass flowered, and in the summer the rats surged."
"The island is full of rats Twenty-one have starved to death."


I have also heard that massive rat infestations damaged the crops of the islands in the Seto Inland Sea, even in the postwar period.
It would not have been uncommon for people in ancient times, and on isolated islands, to starve to death after all their food supplies had been eaten by rats.


It has long been said that bamboo grass flowers blossom only once every sixty years, and they are portents of a cataclysm or the cause of massive rat infestations...

This is what Sakuzo was worried about.
That this island would once again be overcome by rats...

B...But Professor, it's not like the rats would swarm on the island all at once, right?
Couldn't they just exterminate them now before it gets out of hand...?

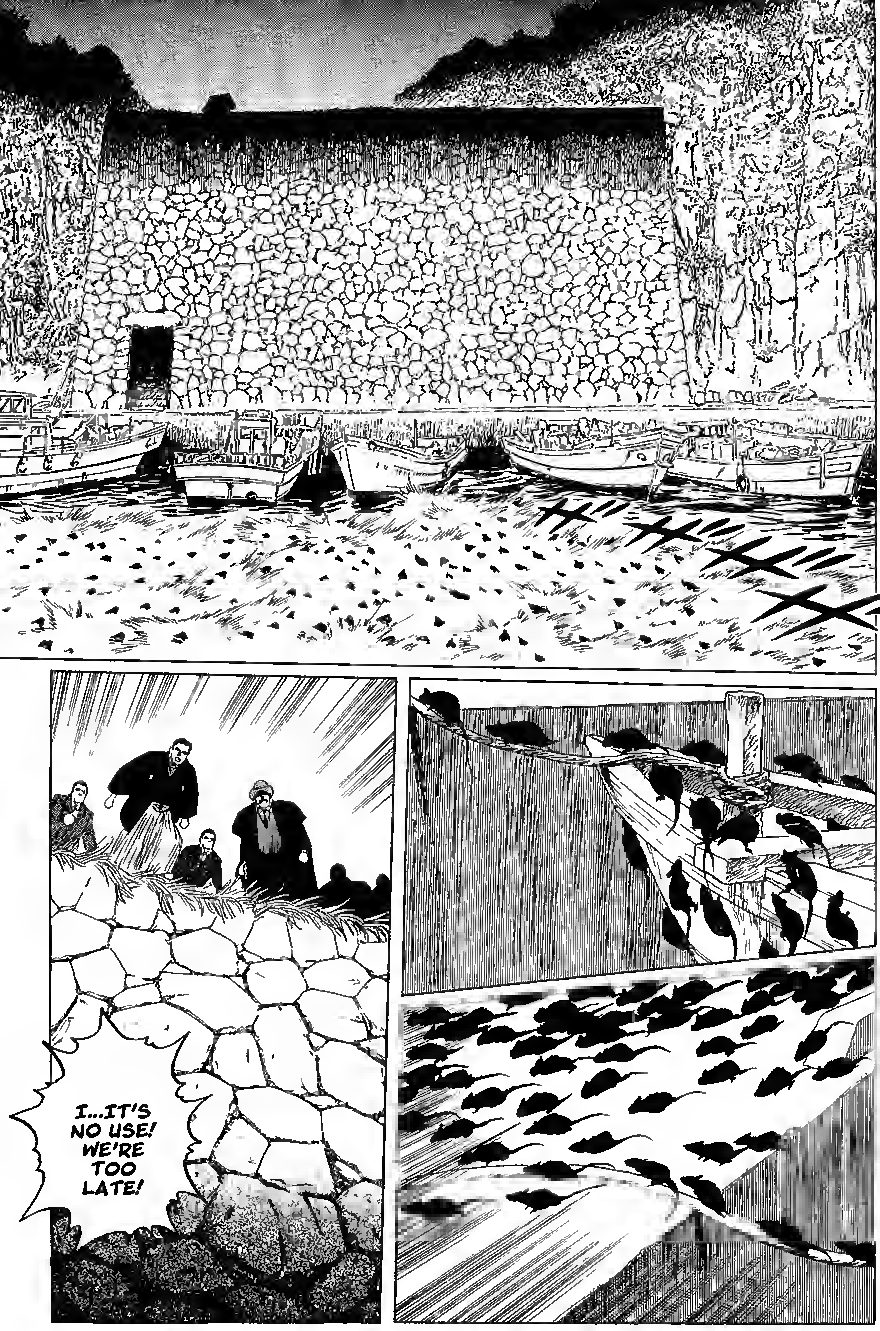
That's Goda's boat whistle! Something must have happened!

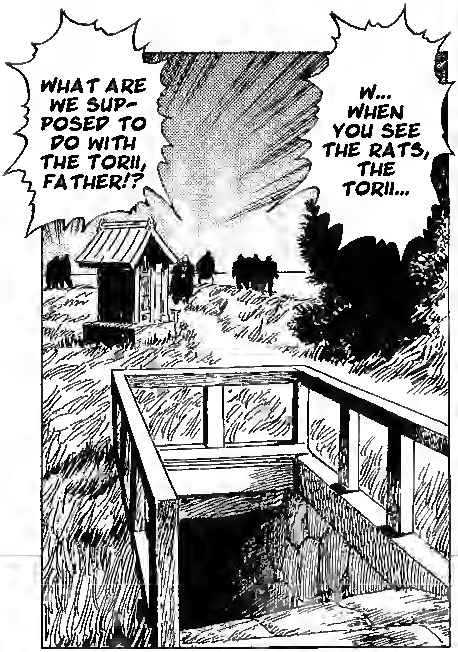
...RATS!?
H... HELP ME...

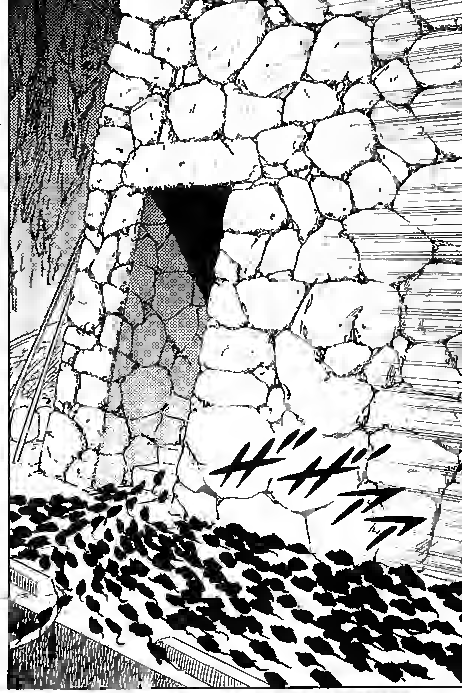
GYAAAHHHHH!!!
EEK...
THEY'RE HEADING FOR THE HARBOR!
.....

IF ALL THOSE RATS WERE TO MULTIPLY ON THE ISLAND, THERE WOULD BE MILLIONS OF THEM IN NO TIME!
MIL-LIONS !?
BRING MORE LIGHT! AND HURRY!

ガガガ
IT'S THIRTY KILOMETERS FROM HERE TO NEZU ISLAND! AND THE RATS SWAM ALL THAT WAY!
IT MUST BE A DESPERATE MASS MIGRATION DUE TO OVERPOPULATION...
THE MESSENGERS FROM ACROSS THE SEA... THE ANCIENTS MUST HAVE WITNESSED THESE SWIMMING RATS!!


I...IT'S NO USE! WE'RE TOO LATE!


WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THE TORII, FATHER!?
W... WHEN YOU SEE THE RATS, THE TORII...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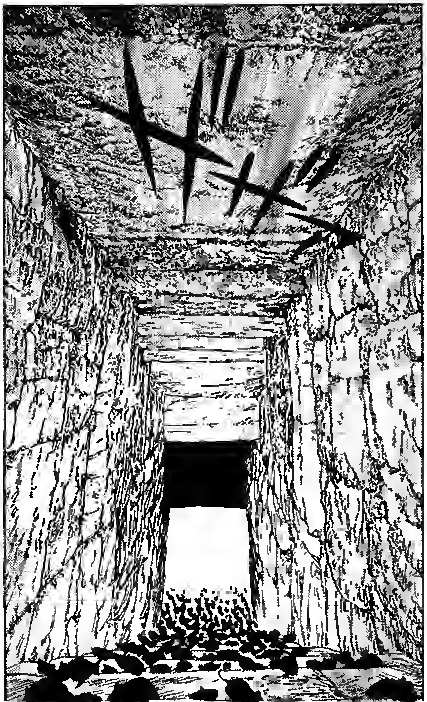

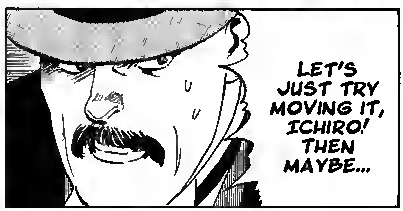
LET'S JUST TRY MOVING IT, ICHIRO! THEN MAYBE...

A STONE CHAIN ...
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ドドドドド
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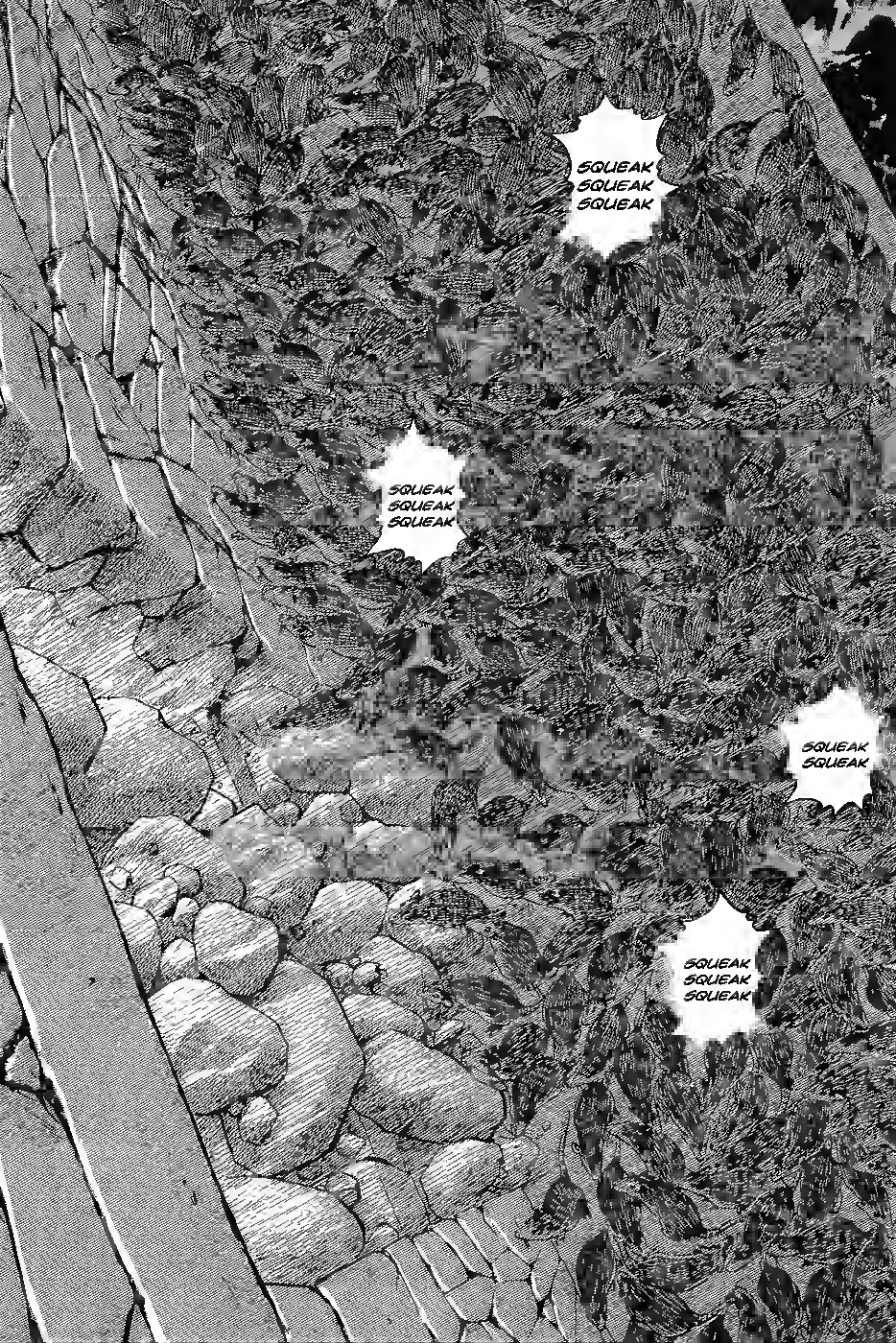
SQUEAK
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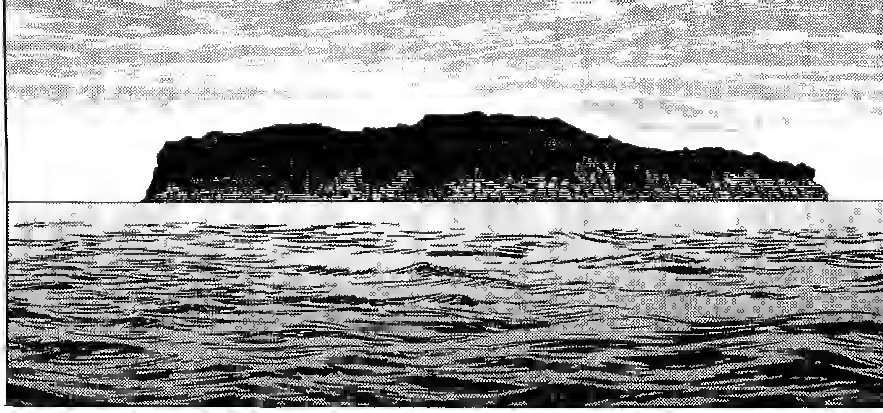
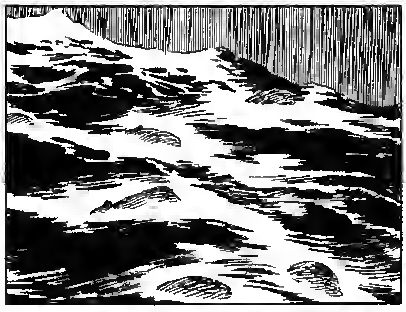
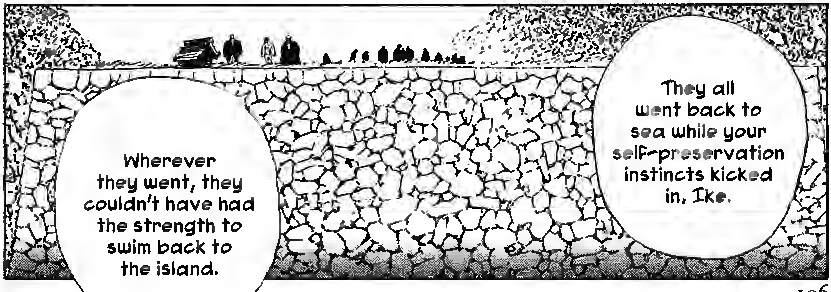
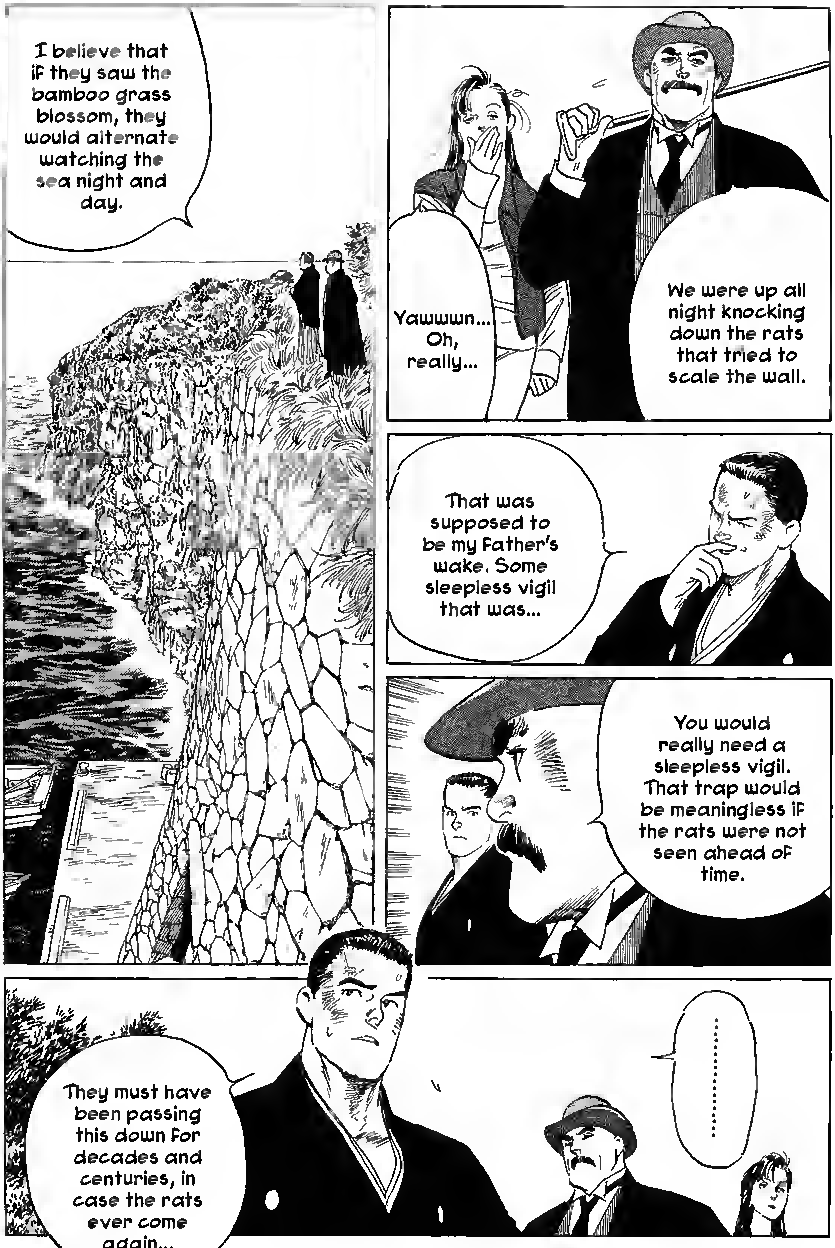





Wherever they went, they couldn't have had the strength to swim back to the island.
They all went back to sea while your self-preservation instincts kicked in, Ike.

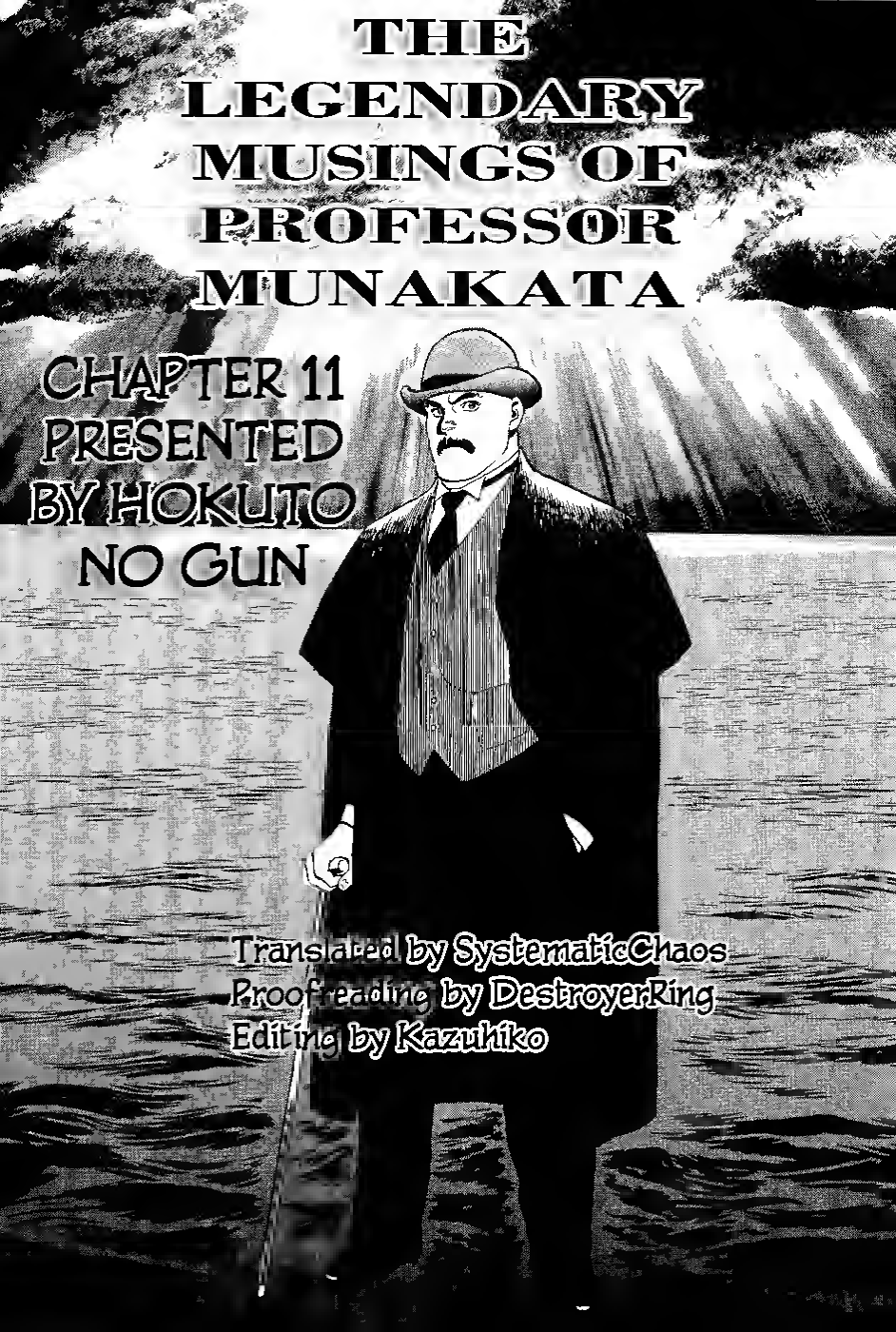

I believe that if they saw the bamboo grass blossom, they would alternate watching the sea night and day.
Yawwwn... Oh, really...
We were up all night knocking down the rats that tried to scale the wall.
That was supposed to be my Father's wake. Some sleepless vigil that was...
You would really need a sleepless vigil. That trap would be meaningless if the rats were not seen ahead of time.
They must have been passing this down for decades and centuries, in case the rats ever come again...
.....

FILE 11: THE RATS' PURE LAND -- END

THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

CHAPTER 11

PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN



Translated by SystematicChaos
Proofreading by DestroyerRing
Editing by Kazuhiko

FILE 12: THE LEGEND OF SNOW WHITE

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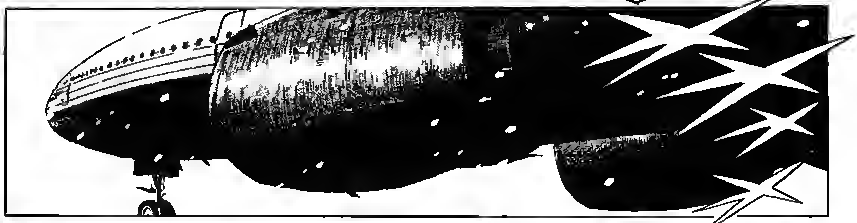
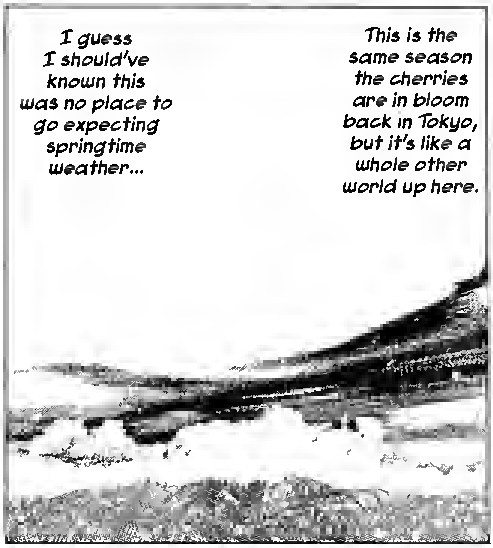
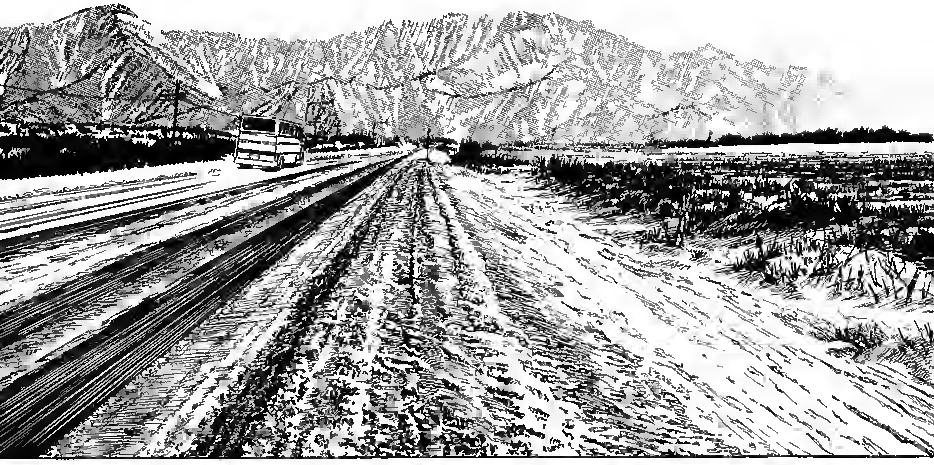
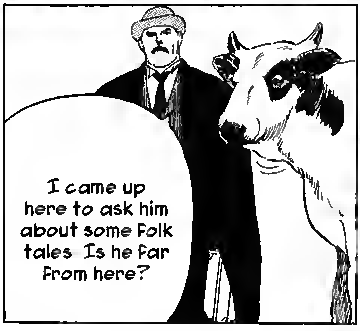


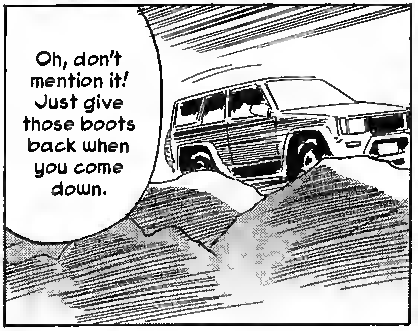

I guess I should've known this was no place to go expecting springtime weather...
This is the same season the cherries are in bloom back in Tokyo, but it's like a whole other world up here.

DAISETSU MOUNTAIN RANGE, HOKKAIDO – APRIL

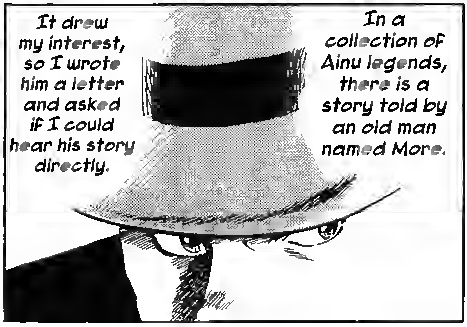




Thank you...


Oh, don't mention it! Just give those boots back when you come down.

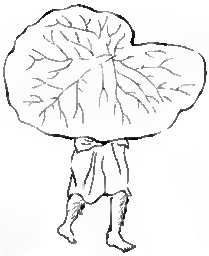
We had a big snowfall this year. I don't know what you came to talk to him about, but you could've picked a better time...


It drew my interest, so I wrote him a letter and asked if I could hear his story directly.
In a collection of Ainu legends, there is a story told by an old man named More.

I'm leaving next week to go on a one-month tour of Europe, and I was hoping to speak with him before I go...
Oh...?

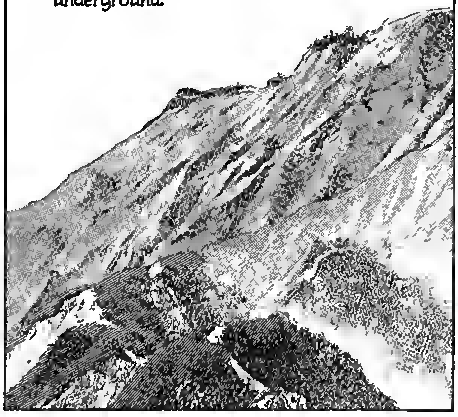
Koro-pok-guru...

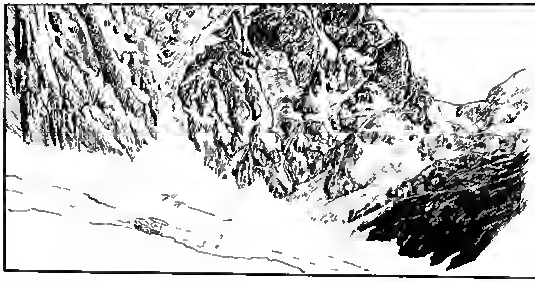
A word that meant "The men that live under the coltsfoot". These dwarves had already achieved a legendary status by the age of the Ainu people.



The elders had a fable that seven koro-pok-guru live in the depths of the mountains.

They say that no one has seen them before, but you can sometimes hear them digging from underground.





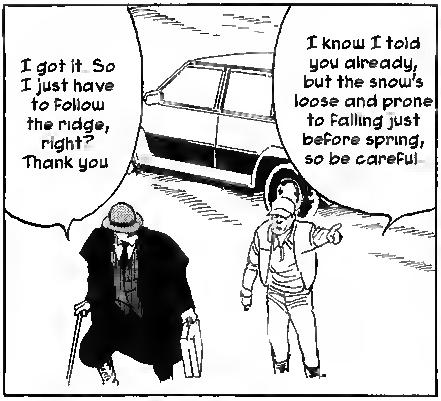
"...East of the Queendom, a thousand ri across the sea, there was still another land, all of the Yamato race. There was also the land of the Shuju to the south, where men grew three our four shaku, four thousand ri from the Queen."

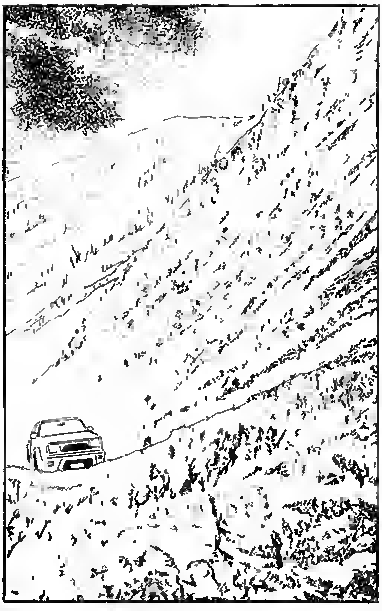
"The History of Wei"

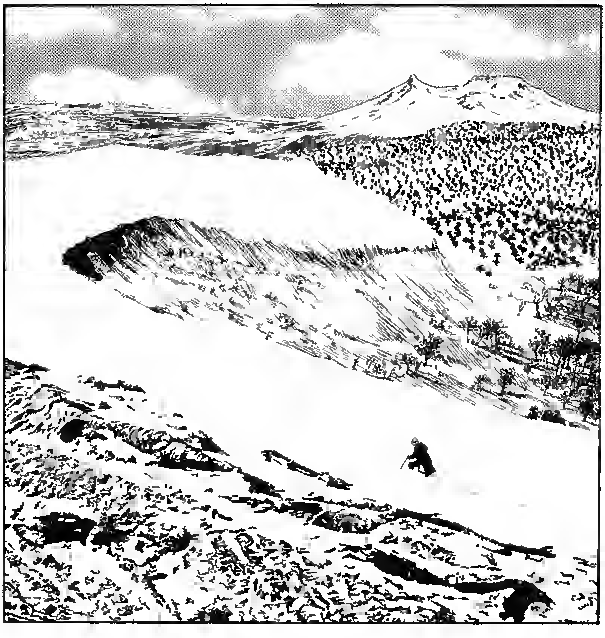
*Shuju = Dwarves. One shaku is 30 centimeters.

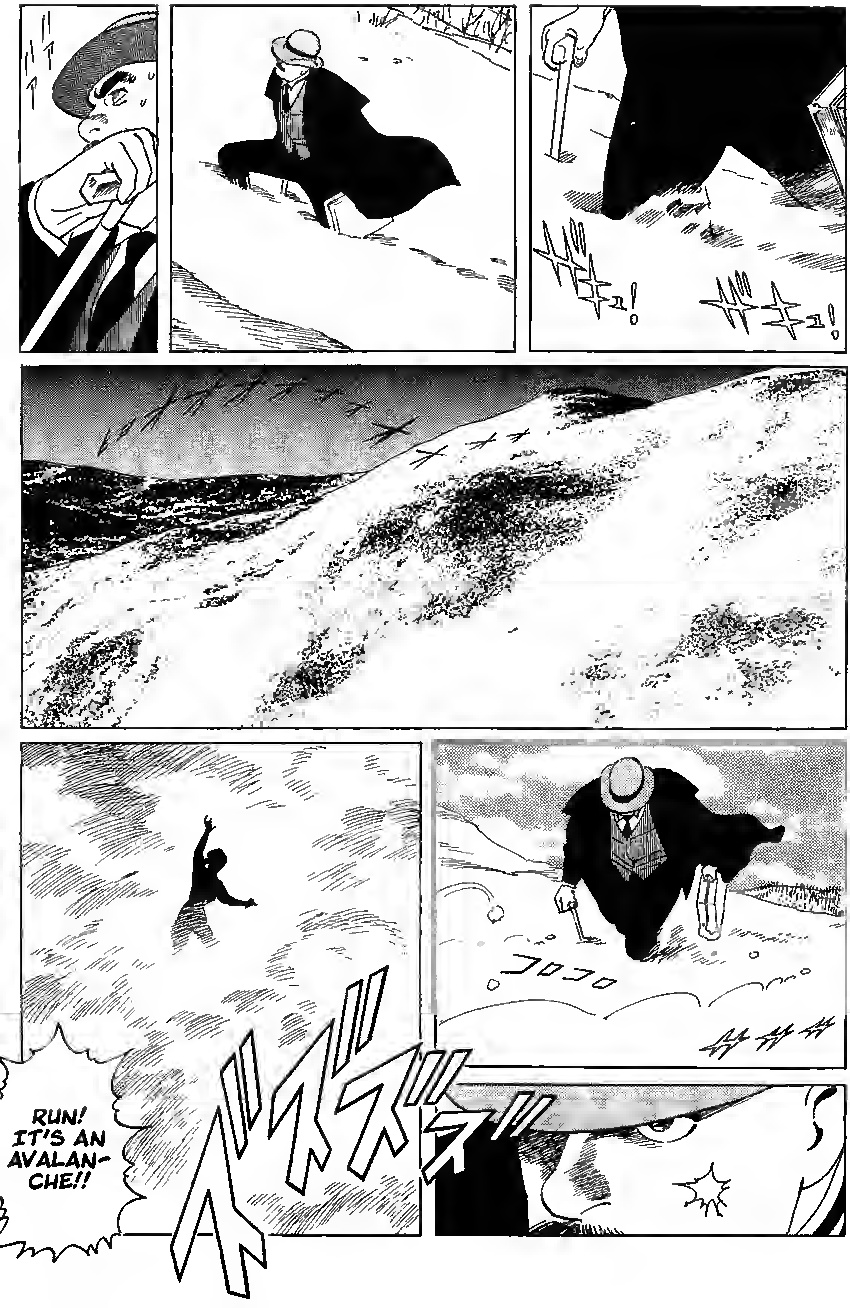
The Seven Dwarves...

The Seven Koro-pok-guru ...


I got it. So I just have to follow the ridge, right? Thank you
I know I told you already, but the snow's loose and prone to falling just before spring, so be careful



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ゴゴゴ
RUN! IT'S AN AVALANCHE!!
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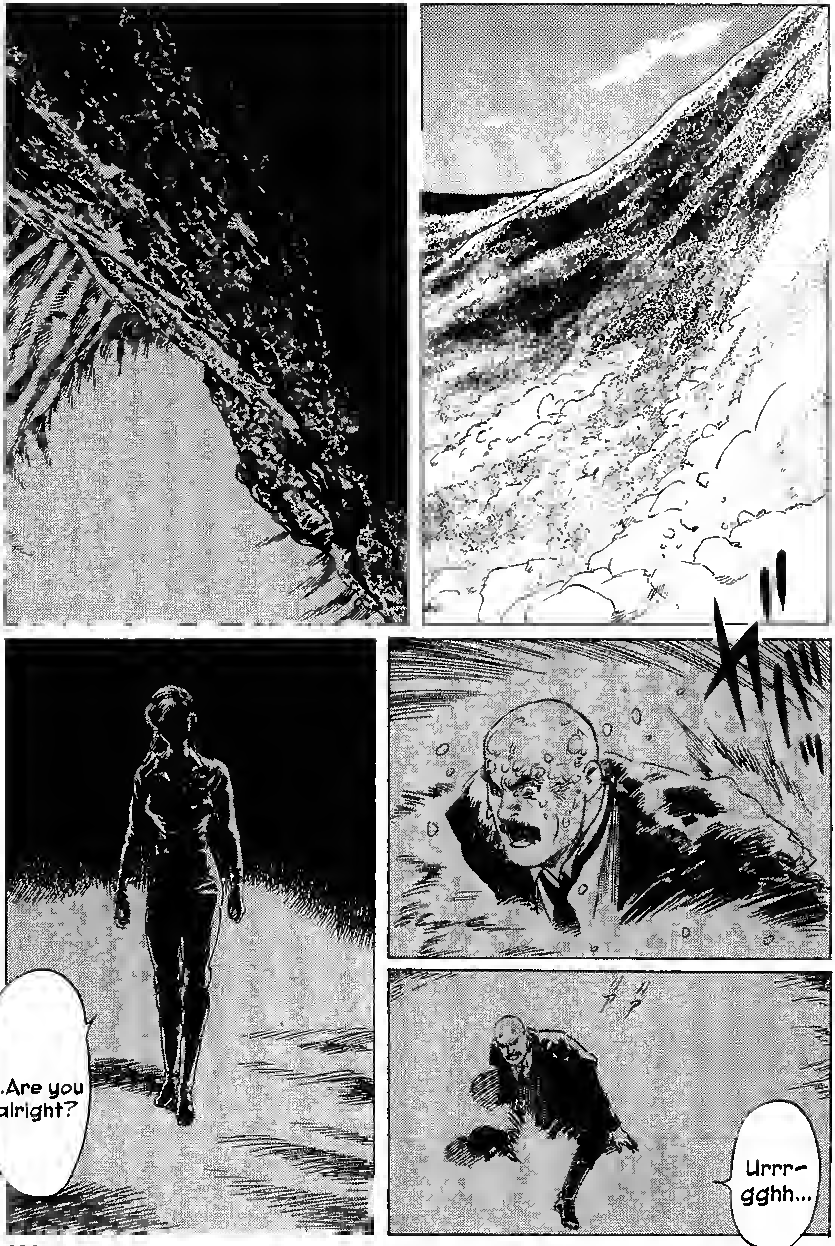
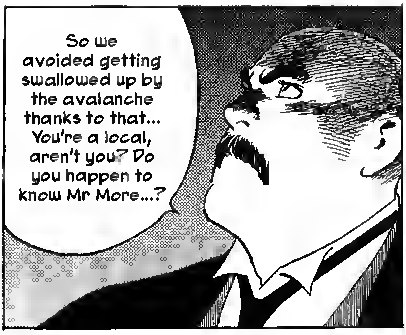
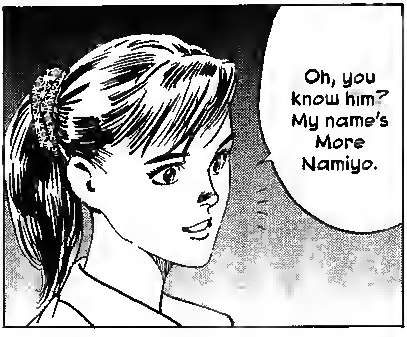
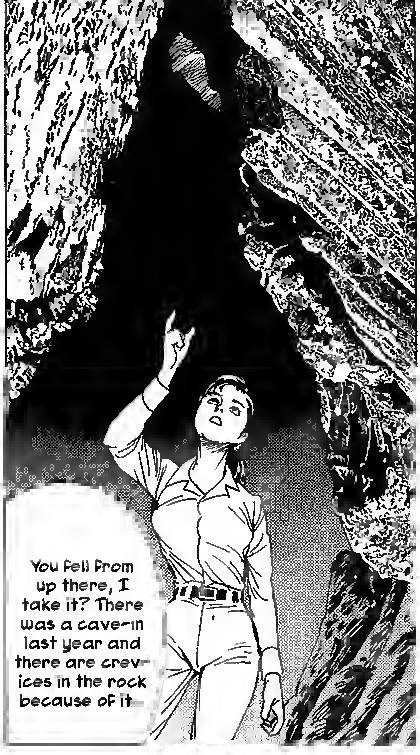
HURRY! RUN BEHIND THAT ROCK!
WAA AAAAA UUUUGG HHHH!


...Are you alright?
Urrr- gghh...

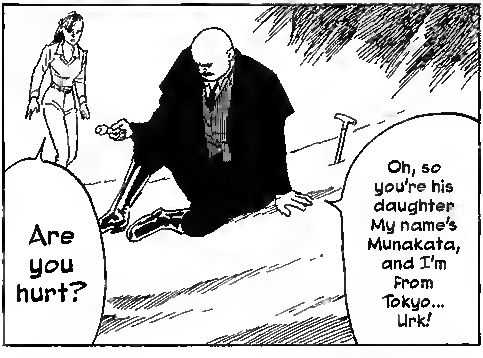
W...Who are you!? You're the one that warned me of the avalanche! Did you get swept away by it, too?

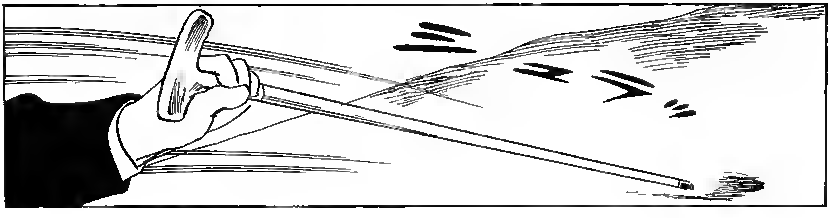

So we avoided getting swallowed up by the avalanche thanks to that... You're a local, aren't you? Do you happen to know Mr More...?

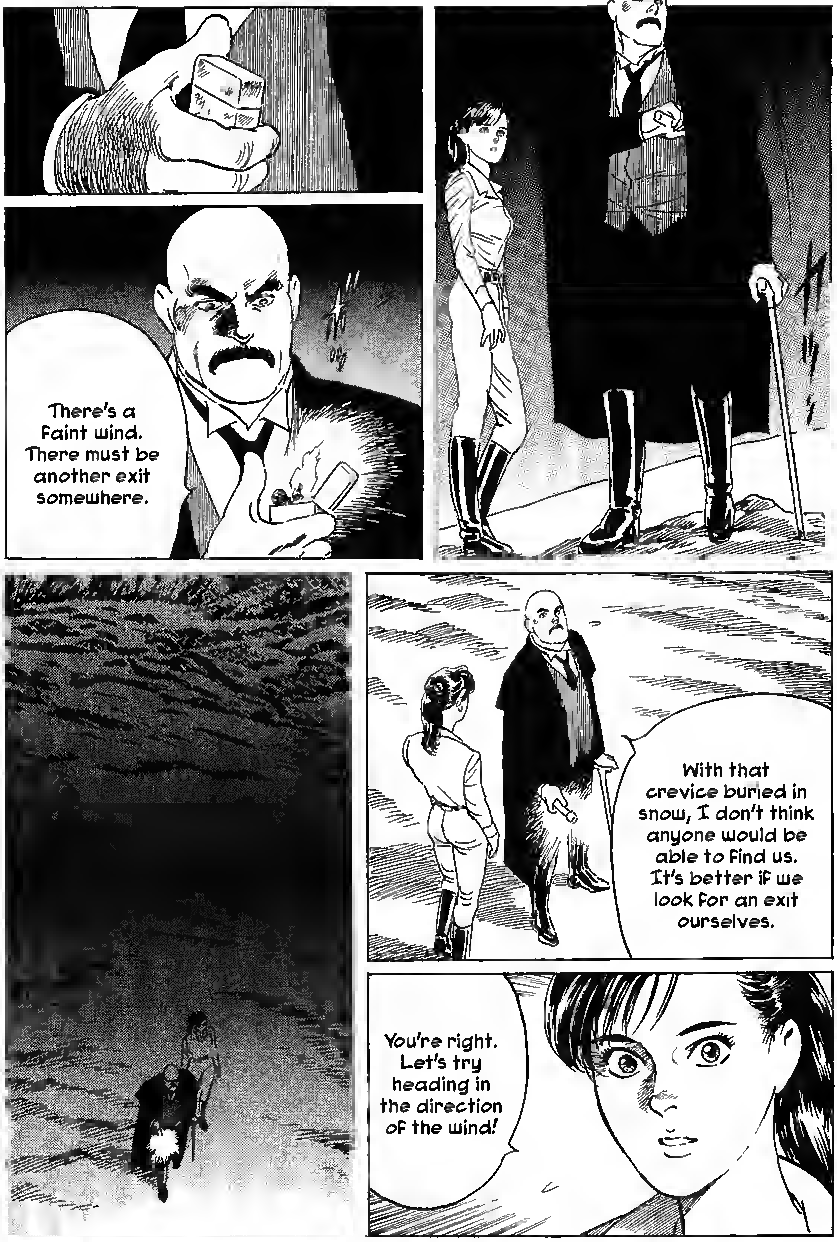

Oh, you know him? My name's More Namiyo.

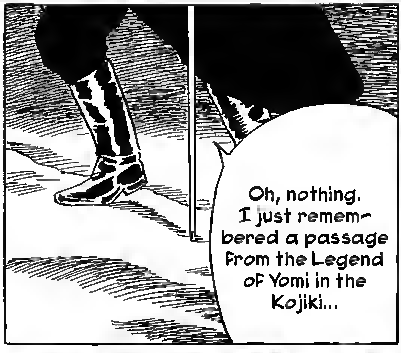

You fell from up there, I take it? There was a cave-in last year and there are crevices in the rock because of it

I think I sprained my ankle. It's nothing, really

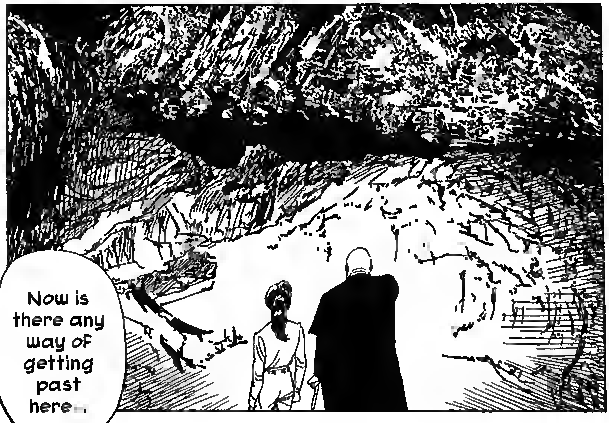

Are you hurt?
Oh, so you're his daughter My name's Munakata, and I'm from Tokyo... Urk!

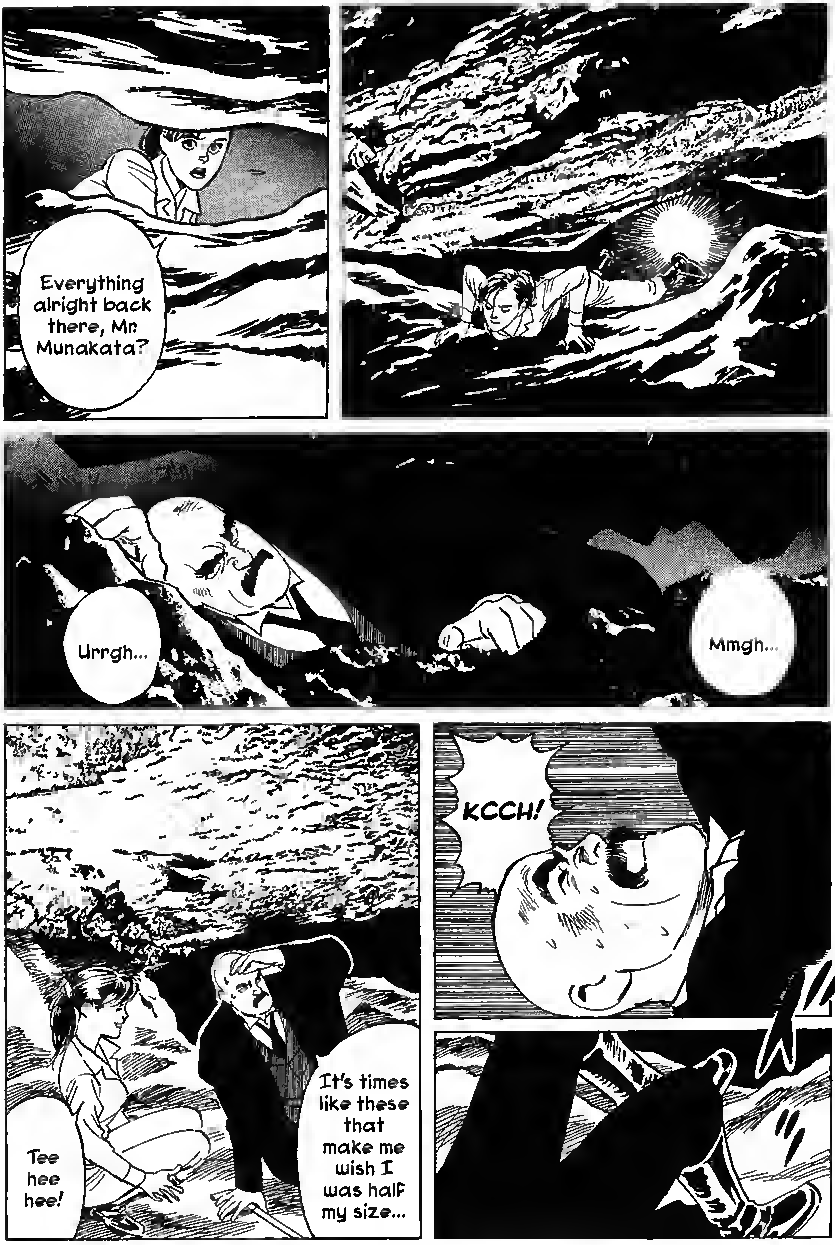



There's a faint wind. There must be another exit somewhere.
With that crevice buried in snow, I don't think anyone would be able to find us. It's better if we look for an exit ourselves.
You're right. Let's try heading in the direction of the wind!


Oh, nothing. I just remembered a passage from the Legend of Yomi in the Kojiki...

Huh?
"When he lit his torch and ventured on in..."

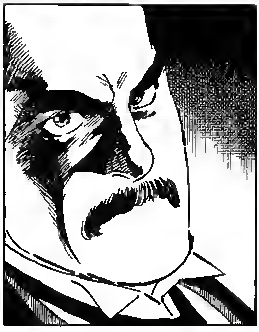

Now is there any way of getting past here...

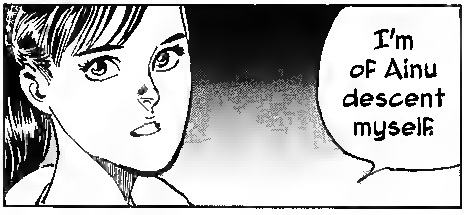

Everything alright back there, Mr. Munakata?
Urrgh...
Mmgh...
KCCH!
It's times like these that make me wish I was half my size...
Tee hee hee!

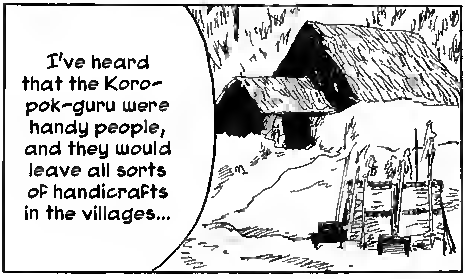
Seems like an iron tool... It must have been attached to a wooden handle and used as a pickaxe.
What's that?
So there were people in this cave...?
Hmm... There are notches in the rock. There may have been some kind of ore deposit here.

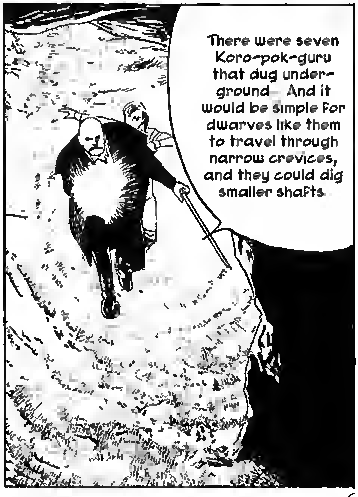
This tunnel is dug out like an ant's nest!
And it's so narrow! If there were people working in here, they'd have to be...

Namiyo, right? Have you heard the legend of the Koro-pok-guru?
Koro-pok-guru?




I'm of Ainu descent myself.

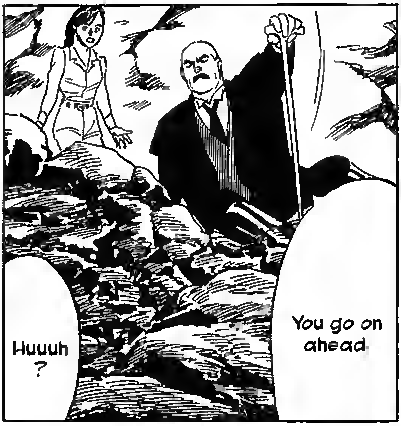

I've heard that the Koro-pok-guru were handy people, and they would leave all sorts of handicrafts in the villages...

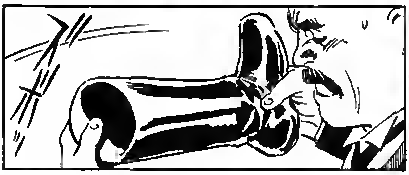

There were seven Koro-pok-guru that dug underground... And it would be simple for dwarves like them to travel through narrow crevices, and they could dig smaller shafts.

Hmm... That is amusing. There are legends of dwarves all over the world, mainly centered in Europe, but the two things they all have in common are their skilled craftsmanship and their art of ore-mining.
That is why they are associated with an underground image.
The Seven Dwarves may now be depicted as woodcutters, but they originally they went into the mountains to mine ore.
For instance, in "Snow White", from the Grimm brothers' compilation of Fairy tales...
Kobolds ?
... Koro-pok-guru!
And the German name for those dwarves was "Kobolds".

I believe that there was a people group in ancient times that spread around the world in search of iron and metal ore ..!
Hehehe... Well, hearing about the Koro-pok-guru made me want to gather the legends of dwarves from Europe.
I don't know whether or not they were the Kobolds, but there is a possibility that they bore the prototype of these various legends throughout the world.
That's pretty large-scale...
I would not be surprised if there was a people group that crossed the Sea of Okhotsk into Hokkaido.

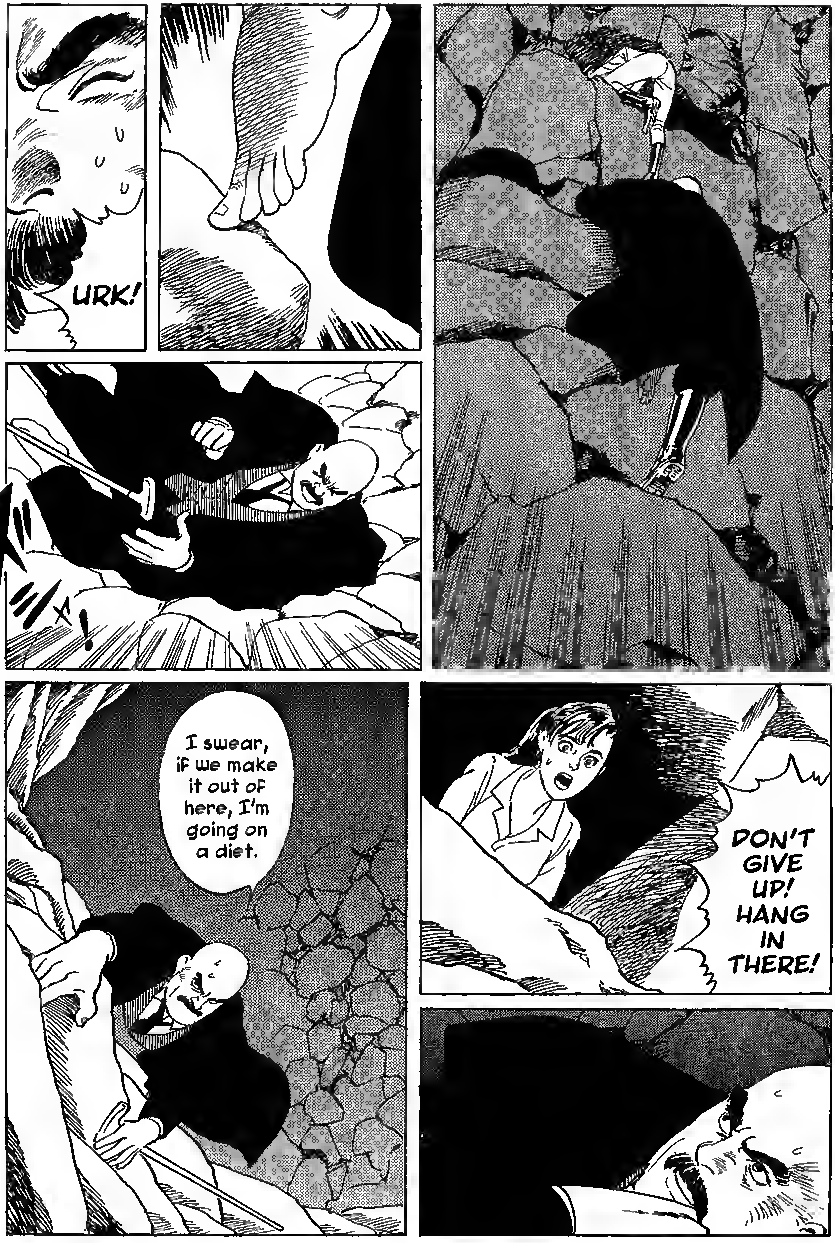
Seems that this is where they sorted out the stones they dug...


Huuuh ?
You go on ahead.

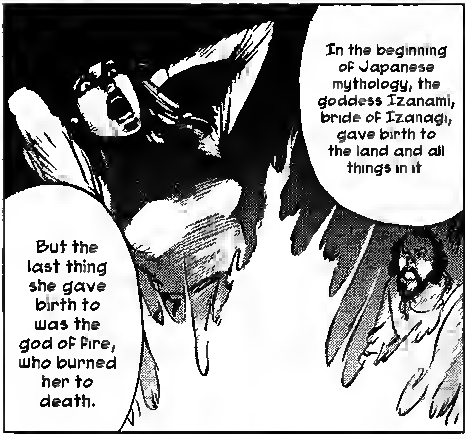


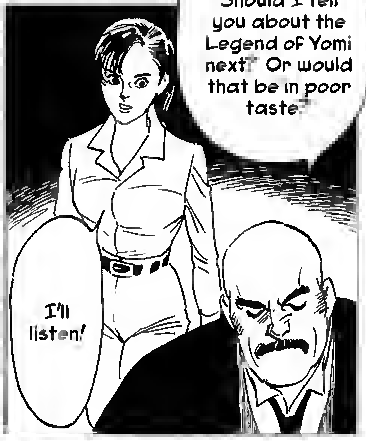
The only way out of here is up there. And I can't make it...

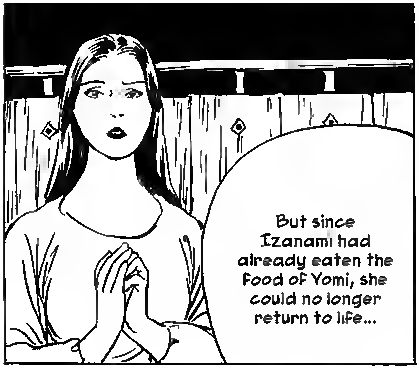
I CAN'T DO THAT!
I'll wait here. You go up, find an exit, and call for help.
DON'T YOU SEE? I CAN'T CLIMB WITH THIS FOOT!
WHAT ABOUT IT!? YOUR LIFE'S ON THE LINE HERE!
I...I don't even know if there's an exit up there. If I go up there alone and get lost, then no one's going to help either of us!
I'd rather stay down here!
You fool!
Never!
I don't want to die all alone in the dark!

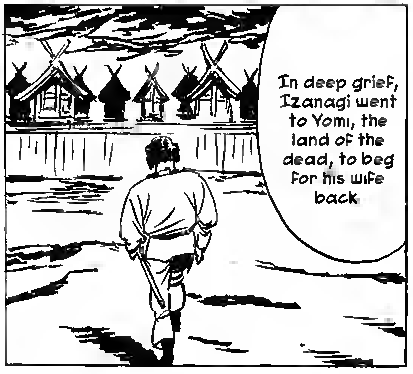

URK!
I swear, if we make it out of here, I'm going on a diet.
DON'T GIVE UP! HANG IN THERE!

It's alright, Mr. Munakata. We'll find an exit...!


In the beginning of Japanese mythology, the goddess Izanami, bride of Izanagi, gave birth to the land and all things in it
But the last thing she gave birth to was the god of fire, who burned her to death.


Should I tell you about the Legend of Yomi next? Or would that be in poor taste?
I'll listen!

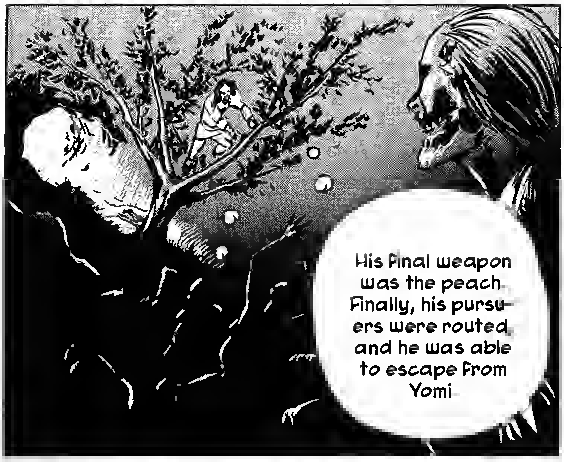

But since Izanami had already eaten the food of Yomi, she could no longer return to life...

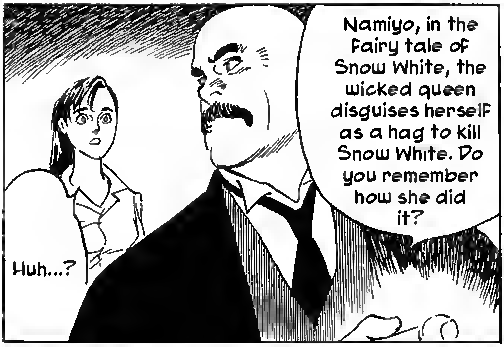

In deep grief, Izanagi went to Yomi, the land of the dead, to beg for his wife back

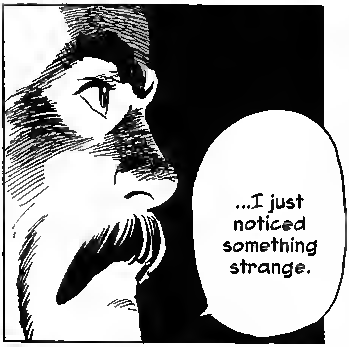
But Izanagi grew impatient, and could wait no longer...
Izanami told him she would speak with the god of Yomi, but he was not to look inside the chamber, then she vanished.
What he saw was the decomposed body of his wife, and eight small hideous thunder gods!

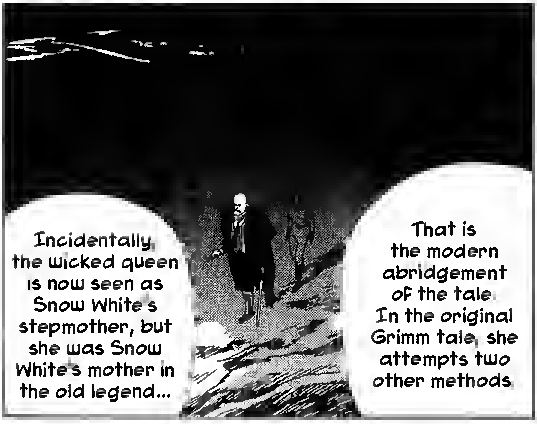
In Norse mythology, for instance, the dwarves that resided underground, the DokkálFar, were born from the rotting corpse of the primitive giant Ymir... The underground, where the ore rests, was also a world of death and decay..
I have a feeling that the eight thunder gods of this legend were dwarves.
Izanami pursued her traitorous husband together with the hags of Yomi, shouting "Don't let him leave Yomi alive!"

Izanagi threw down his headdress, and it became a grapevine that stopped the hags in their tracks.
He then threw his comb, which became a stand of bamboo shoots. Once again, the hags ceased their pursuit as they ate them.

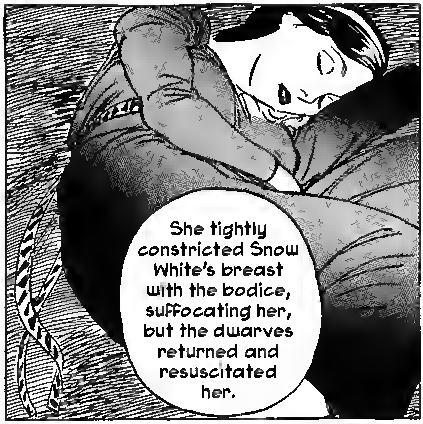

His final weapon was the peach. Finally, his pursuers were routed, and he was able to escape from Yomi.


Namiyo, in the fairy tale of Snow White, the wicked queen disguises herself as a hag to kill Snow White. Do you remember how she did it?
Huh...?

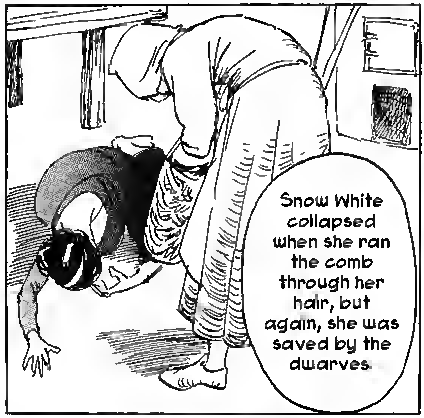

...I just noticed something strange.


Incidentally, the wicked queen is now seen as Snow White's stepmother, but she was Snow White's mother in the old legend...
That is the modern abridgement of the tale. In the original Grimm tale, she attempts two other methods.

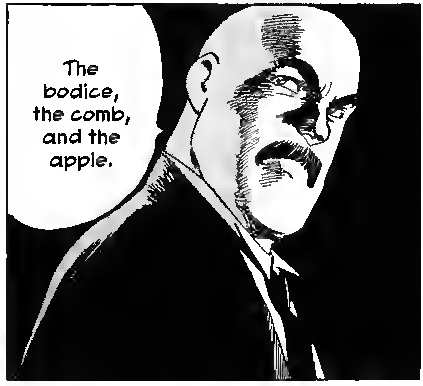
Oh, right! The poisoned apple! She poisoned an apple and gave it to Snow White!

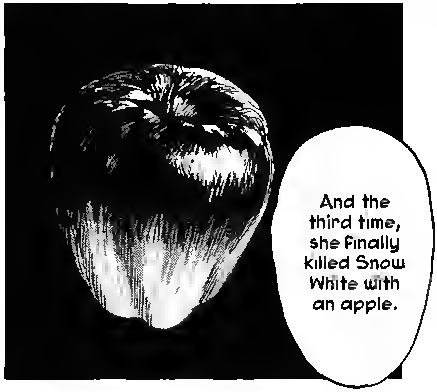

She tightly constricted Snow White's breast with the bodice, suffocating her, but the dwarves returned and resuscitated her.

The first thing the wicked queen brought after she disguised herself as an old peddler was a bodice.


Snow White collapsed when she ran the comb through her hair, but again, she was saved by the dwarves.

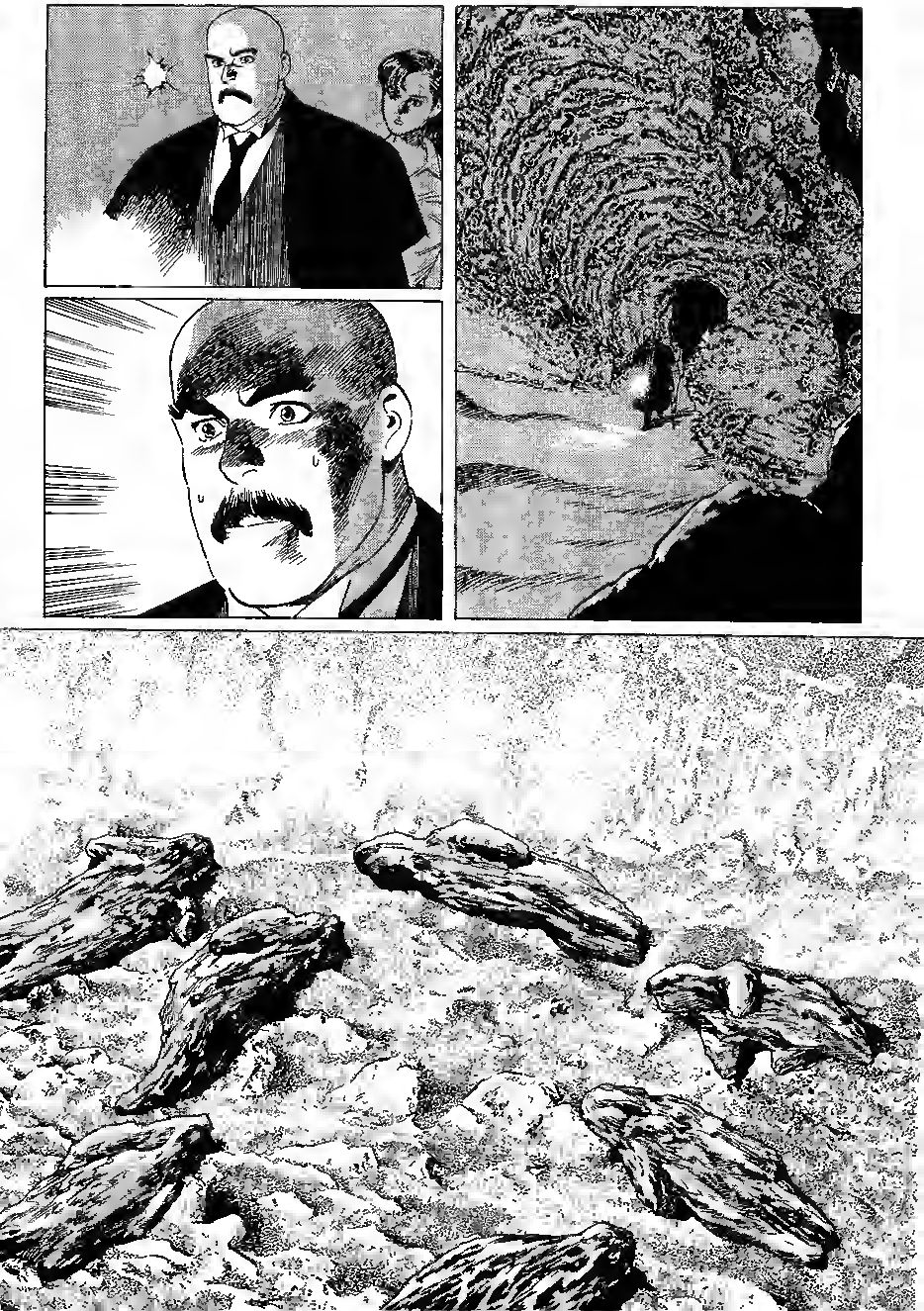
The next thing the old peddler sold her was a poisoned comb.


The bodice, the comb, and the apple.


And the third time, she finally killed Snow White with an apple.

That's just like the hairpiece, the comb, and the peach from the myth!
There are more similarities yet. After dying, Snow White did not decay but remained beautiful, guarded by the Seven Dwarves.
Then she is resurrected by a passing prince, and they are wed...
Izanagi, too, went down to Yomi to revive his dead wife, just like the prince.
But what he found was a decayed corpse defended by eight thunder gods. The myth ends in tragedy, a polar opposite to the Fairy tale.

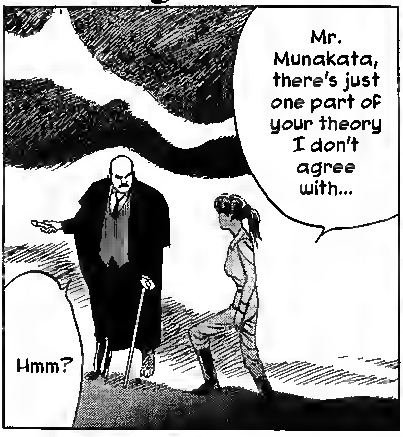
It was to kill his wife Izanami once more!
It was a curse to seal her repulsive sight in the land of the dead forever!
Izanami was then forced to use the headpiece, the comb, and the peach, just like the wicked queen... Do you know why?
Both myths and fairy tales originate with folklore.
The cord, the comb, and the fruit. I believe these three objects were part of a killing curse that spread throughout the world.
And this is proof that tales and spells were transmitted all over the world from people to people!

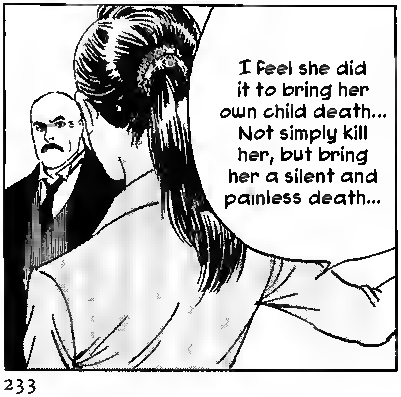


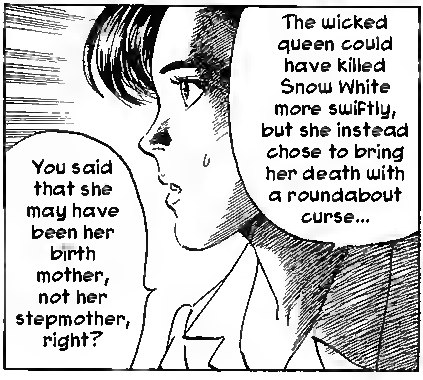
These are corpses that have been exposed to water so long, they have turned into wax!
Adipo-cere!
One, two, three, four... There's seven of them...
They're as small as children .. Perhaps the thawing snow has melted them down...

Ohh...

Look, the exit's up there!


Mr. Munakata, there's just one part of your theory I don't agree with...
Hmm?


I feel she did it to bring her own child death... Not simply kill her, but bring her a silent and painless death...

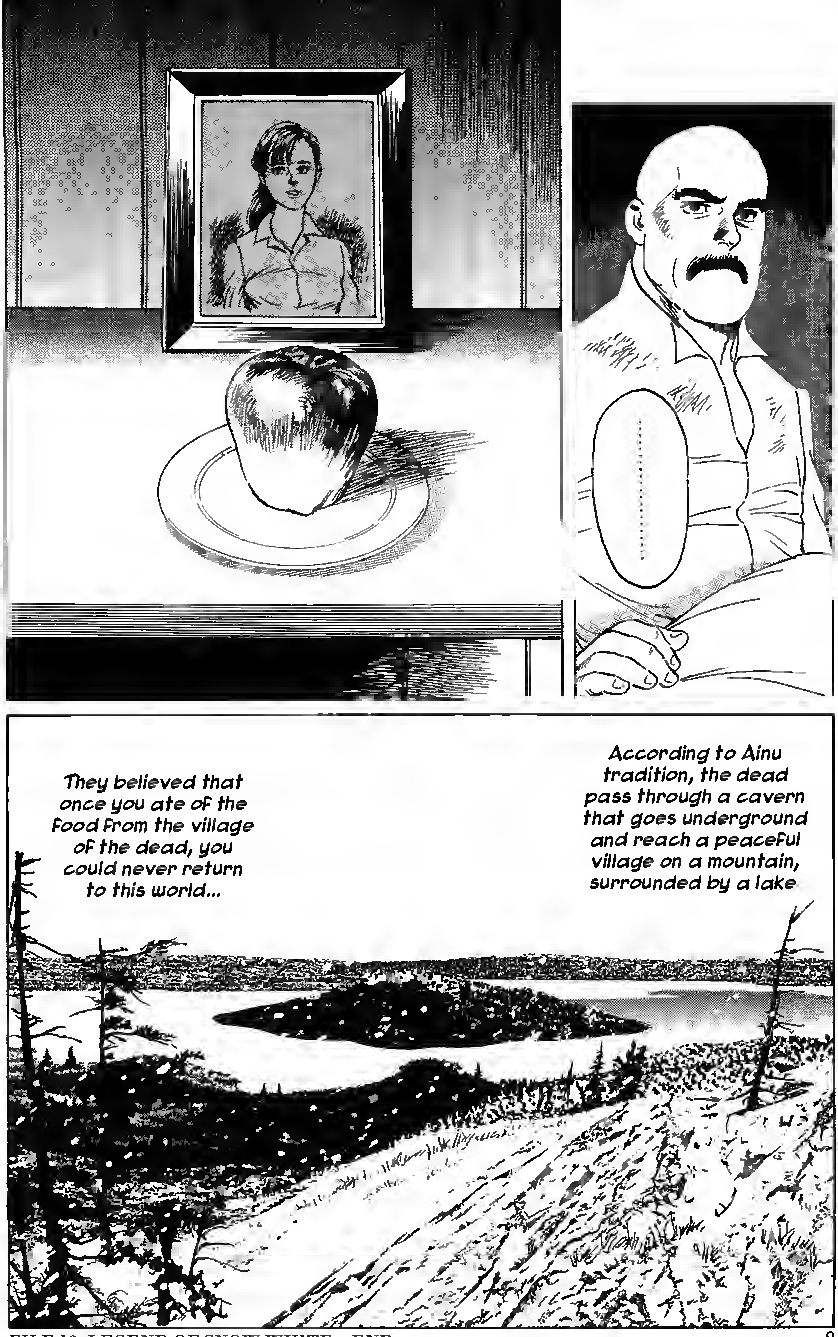

The wicked queen could have killed Snow White more swiftly, but she instead chose to bring her death with a roundabout curse...
You said that she may have been her birth mother, not her stepmother, right?

This curse must have been one filled with love.
He wanted to rid the world of his wife's unrecognizable form because he once loved her.
The same goes for Izanagi...
Here...
Hmm... Well, we can talk on it more once we get out of here.
Tell him that I fell down here and couldn't move... but that I waited for him.
Tell More, my husband...
Husband!? ...Huh!?

WAAAUUUCCHHH!

I'm not entirely sure how I climbed out of that cave after that.

Forty years ago...?
This comb you were holding was the same one I bought my wife forty years ago.
I looked all over for her, but that cave was the one place I did not venture into...
Out of fear...
The very first spring after we were wed and moved up here, there was an avalanche... I had just come home from shopping in town.
I'll be coming soon. Please, wait for me...
I'm sorry, Namiyo. You must've been so lonely...


They believed that once you ate of the food from the village of the dead, you could never return to this world...
According to Ainu tradition, the dead pass through a cavern that goes underground and reach a peaceful village on a mountain, surrounded by a lake

❖おことわり❖

この作品はフィクションです。
実在の人物・団体・事件などには一切関係ありません。
また、雑誌掲載時の時代を背景に描かれていますので、
現在の国名、単位表記と異なる表現がありますが、
あえてそのままとしました。ご了承ください。

❖初出単行本❖

一九九六年十二月二〇日　小社より刊行

解説

想像力を刺激し、思考の迷宮に誘う

竹内オサム
同志社大学教授

『宗像教授伝奇考』はきわめて知的な装いをもったマンガだ。読者の想像力をスリリングに刺激し、新たな人類史の夢想へとぼくたちをいざなう。歴史の組み換えを強いる。またあるときは、これまでの正史とはいったい何だったかと、読者を思考の迷宮へと誘いこむ。

ただし、表向きは地味な作品に映ってしまう。こみいった理屈も多いし、モノローグによる展開も目立つ。描線もストイックで、だいいち主人公が髭面の大学教授、それだけで「読むのやーめた」と拒否反応を起こす読者がいるかもしれない。刺激的な場面を売りものにするマンガの多いなか、こういった構成をもつ本作は、まじめすぎてとっつきにくい印象を与えることだろう。

だからこそと言うべきか、その一方で根強い固定ファンをもつ。一度その世界にふれたら病みつきになる。つぎつぎと続編に手をだして読み進めてしまう。おそらくこの本を手

にした読者の大半は、そのような体験を繰りかえしているにちがいない。

実はぼくもそうだった。「妖女伝説」から「ヤマタイカ」、そして『宗像教授伝奇考』と、作者の突き進むジャンルに、いつも感心しつつ読み継いできた。こんなにおもしろいのに、これほどスリリングなのに、どうしてもっと話題にならないのか。はがゆい思いをしてきた。

この作品に強くひかれるのは、ひょっとするとぼく自身の体験が反映しているせいかもしれない。近頃そんなふうに思ったりもする。

個人的な経験を言うようだが、この作品を読むと、ひとむかし前に話題となった竹内文書のことを思いだす。近年に発見され、のち大本教の教義にも大きな影響を与えた古文書のことだ。あとで偽物だと判明するこの偽史には、日本列島の地形と五大陸からなる世界地図の相似が指摘され、日本が世界のひな型であると説かれている。ぼくは若いころある雑誌の紹介記事に強く興味ひかれたものだ。ふりかえると少年期青年期とは、そうした秘史にやたら興味をもつ時期であるのかもしれない。

デニケンの著作もそうだった。異星人がすでに地球にやってきていて、地球文明が実は古代の知恵の残滓だという説は、奇想天外さを通りこして、読者の頭を錯乱させるのに十分な内容だった。現実の歴史は、教科書が教える歴史通りではなく、本当はこんなふうになっているのじゃないかと、ナイーブな少年はまたもや妄想をかきたてられるのだった。

ただし、そっちの世界にずーっと浸りこむと、相当やばいことになってしまう。だが、たいてい少年たちは、ある時期を境にまた別の分野へと関心を移していく。そして大人になってから、当時のことを懐かしく回想したりするのだ。ともあれ、青少年たちを魅了する、そのような常軌を逸した妄想の系譜が、『宗像教授伝奇考』を背後から支えていることはまちがいない。

このマンガはまた、人物像がおもしろい。本編の主人公は、東亜大学の教授で民俗学を専門とする宗像伝奇（むなかたでんき）。その名と専門分野には、連載当時再評価されマスコミで話題となっていた民俗学者南方熊楠のイメージがまとわりつく。実際の熊楠の方は、水木しげるによってマンガ化されてもいる。それを読んでもわかるが、エネルギッシュな野人のおもむきが強い。明治人の気骨にあふれている。

が、本編の主人公宗像の方はストイックな雰囲気の方が目立つ。どちらかと言えばナイーブな感覚の持ち主で、野性味よりは知性の方が強調されている。謎解きというストーリー展開のためではなく、おそらくこれは作者の資質によるものではないだろうか。

手塚治虫の「ブラック・ジャック」のイメージも相当かぶっているようにみえる。黒いマントに黒ズボン…。

だが、そのスタイル以上に類似しているなと感じるのは、作品づくりの方法にある。手塚の「ブラック・ジャック」は、短編ながら毎週毎週重いテーマを手際よく料理していた。

画面構成や展開の手法は、短編マンガのお手本と呼んでいいものだ。手塚マンガの、というよりもマンガ表現全体のひとつの極致を、そこにみいだすことができる。

同様に『宗像教授伝奇考』の方も、短編としての凝縮度がきわめて高い。ともすれば、学説の羅列に終わりそうな展開を、その横にもうひとつ別の人間のドラマを立てることによってぐいぐい読ませる。毎月毎月、奇想天外な素材をいかに整合性のある物語に組み上げることができるのか。本編は星野之宣というマンガ家にとっても、かなり困難な実験作であったにちがいない。直接「ブラック・ジャック」を手本にしたかどうかは別にして、同様の挑戦を行っていた、同じ労苦を背負っていたのではと推測するのだ。

さらに、この作品には、同時代の他のマンガ家からの影響も色濃い。

作者は、はじめSFマンガを得意にした。海外のSF小説の刺激のもとに活動をスタートした。しかし、「妖女伝説」や「ヤマトの火」「ヤマタイカ」などの一連の作品をみてもわかるように、以降関心の範囲を広げ、特に古代史に取材した傑作をものにしている。一九九五年から『月刊コミックトム』に始まった本作も、そうした関心の上にたつ連載だった。

では、古代史への関心は、作者のなかに自然と育ったものかと言うとそうではなく、同時代のマンガ家の影響を直接受けたものと思われる。星野と同じく手塚賞から育った鬼才諸星大二郎の影響をである。諸星は、「孔子暗黒伝」「妖怪ハンター」「マッドメン」などの

作品で、文化人類学や民俗学宗教学の知見をおりまぜ、独自の世界を構築してみせた。星野は画風こそ諸星とは根本的に異なるものの、民族史や古代史への関心を喚起されたようだ。そうして、星野なりの「妖怪ハンター」の物語が誕生した、それが『宗像教授伝奇考』だと考えられるのだ。

なにやら、ぼくは、他の作品との類似点を挙げてばかりいるかにみえる。外見のスタイルは「ブラック・ジャック」、主人公の名前や専門は南方熊楠、民俗学や古代史への興味は諸星作品と類似しているというふうに。こう言うと、まるで『宗像教授伝奇考』にオリジナリティーがないと主張しているように受け取られかねない。しかし、実はそうではない。逆に、マンガの王道をいく作品として、『宗像教授伝奇考』を称賛しているつもりなのである。

マンガというのは、もともと〈引用＋加工の文化〉であるというのが、ぼくの変わらぬ持論だ。これまでのできあいの物語を取りこみながら、独自の味付けをしていく。既成のキャラクターを手本に、自分なりのテーマを紡ぎだす。そうしてできあがった表現がマンガなのだ。大衆に支持される作品には、あるいは名作マンガと呼ばれるものには、必ずそうした文化の系譜が背後に横たわっている。「鉄腕アトム」しかり、「ゲゲゲの鬼太郎」しかり、「MONSTER」や「バガボンド」などもそう。

マンガ史を形づくった巨人たち、手塚治虫、石ノ森章太郎、水木しげる、近いところで

は浦沢直樹、大友克洋、井上雄彦などは、そのことをよく理解していて、逆に言えばいかに既成の文化を自己のマンガに接ぎ木しているかにより、そのマンガ家の実力が察知できるほどなのだ。星野もそうした一群の才能の一人にほかならない。いま述べたマンガ文化の体質をよく理解する人であり、そうした意味で優れた才能をもつマンガ家であると判断できる。

では、先行する物語やキャラクターの上に付け加えられた、星野の独自の資質とはいったい何だろう。

ひとつは物語づくりにおける、緊密なドラマ展開の手法にあるのではないかと思う。たとえば、本作第二集に収録された「白雪の伝説」などは、上質の短編小説の趣がある。物語の中心は小人伝説をめぐって進展。ただしこれだけだと、民俗学の知見を寄せ集めた対話劇になって、読者を退屈させるはず。ところが宗像教授がクレバスに落下し、出会った女がすでに死に絶えていた女の幻影であったというオチをラストにすえることにより、緊密さを生みだしている。その処理のしかたが、なかなかうまい。

『宗像教授伝奇考』は、同じく優れた短編集でありながら、「ブラック・ジャック」以上に構成力が要求される作品ではなかったかと想像する。物語の状況設定に関わって。「ブラック・ジャック」という物語は、外科手術により、目にみえる異物にメスを入れるというストーリーが基本となっていた。一方、『宗像教授伝奇考』では、知的思考により、目に

みえないものを紡ぎあわせるという展開が中心軸となる。いきおい、ストーリーは言葉にたよった構成をとりがちになるが、実際にはそうなっていない。本文をぺらぺらめくっていただくとわかるが、意外にもセリフや説明の言葉が少ない。その点がすごい。なかなかのものだ。

また、思想性においても作者は、手塚や諸星とは異なった関心を抱く。いわば、日本人のアイデンティティー探しというべきか。日本人とは日本民族とはというテーマに強く関心を寄せており、その点で他作家とはまた異なった彩りをもっている。大作「ヤマタイカ」などは直接にそれをあつかったものだが、本作の第二集でも、「両面宿儺」や「鉄人の逆襲」などにその片鱗がみられる。

ともあれ、さまざまな知見を結びあわせて、新たな妄想をつくりだす星野の才能には、目をみはるものがある。点と点は作者の手によって、ひとつの意味ある線に姿を変える。隠された人類史を再構築するその手腕に、ぼくの脳裏には、さまざまな偽史に胸ときめかせた若い頃の記憶がふつふつとわきだす。

現実を知的に歪曲していく星野の世界に、文句なしにのめりこめるか。あるいは、あきれかえって本を放りだしてしまうのか。その境目に、すでにどこかに棚上げしてしまった少年期の感覚の針が、右に左に揺れ動いているように感じられるのだ。

"THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA" REPORTAGE:

SANNAI-MARUYAMA RUINS OVERTURN THE "COMMON THEORY"

"THE JOMON PEOPLE BUILT FULL-FLEDGED CITIES"

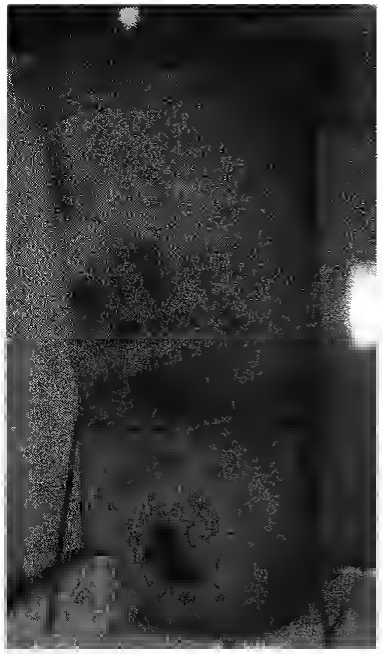
THE SYMBOL OF THE SANNAI MARUYAMA RUINS, THE "LARGE SIX-PILLARED BUILDING" (RESTORED)

THE "SANNAI-MARUYAMA RUINS" (AOMORI CITY) ARE THE LARGEST JOMON SETTLEMENT RUINS IN JAPAN. THE OBJECTS EXCAVATED FROM THESE RUINS HAVE FILLED 40,000 CARDBOARD BOXES TO DATE, AND THE EXCAVATION IS ONLY 40% COMPLETE. THE SANNAI-MARUYAMA SETTLEMENT BEGAN APPROXIMATELY 5,500 YEARS AGO, AND THE PEOPLE UTILIZED THEIR TECHNOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGE TO BUILD A CITY IT WOULD CONTINUE TO PROSPER FOR THE NEXT 1,500 YEARS.

THE POTTERIES HAVE A VARIETY OF SHAPES AND USES

TEXT YAMAGATA MIYUKI
PHOTOGRAPHY MIZUSHIMA YOKO

THE LARGEST 'TABULAR FIGURE' IN JAPAN, STANDS 32CM TALL. THE HEAD AND BODY WERE UNEARTHED 90M APART.



A "CYLINDRICAL EARTHENWARE" THOUGHT TO BE A CHILD'S GRAVE.

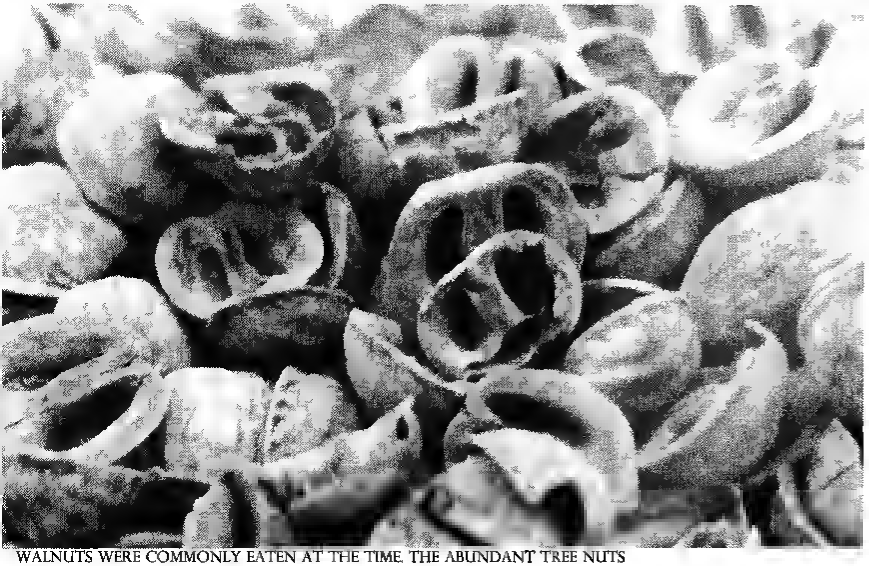
1. PRAYERS MADE TO CLAY FIGURES AND GRAVES

WELL OVER 1,600 CLAY FIGURES, 880* GRAVES OF CHILDREN, AND 220 GRAVES OF ADULTS HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED FROM THE SITE. THE MAJORITY OF THE CLAY FIGURES ARE MADE IN THE SHAPE OF WOMEN, THE SYMBOL OF VITALITY AND BIRTH, AND THERE ARE MANY CASES WHERE FRAGMENTS OF A SINGLE FIGURE WERE FOUND SCATTERED IN DIFFERENT PLACES. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE CLAY FIGURES WERE REGARDED AS EFFIGIES FOR PEOPLE, AND ANY ILL PARTS OF THE BODY WERE CUT AWAY AND REMOVED. THE DEAD CHILDREN WERE BURIED CLOSE TO THE RESIDENCES, SO THEY WOULD PROMPTLY RETURN TO THEIR MOTHERS' WOMBS. THESE CLAY FIGURES AND GRAVES WERE DEEPLY INGRAINED WITH THE PEOPLE'S PRAYERS.

*THE MANGA MENTIONS 700 CHILDREN'S GRAVES, BUT EXCAVATION HAS CONTINUED SINCE THEN, AND THERE HAVE BEEN 880 CHILDREN'S GRAVES FOUND AS OF NOW.

THERE IS A THEORY THAT CLAY FIGURES WHOSE HEADS AND FEET WERE PURPOSEFULLY CUT APART WERE USED AS PRAYERS TO HEAL ILLNESSES.

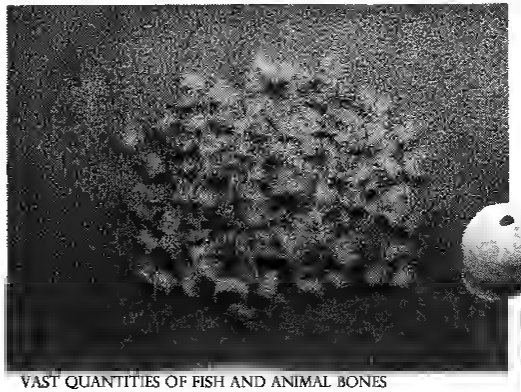
THE JOMON PERIOD WAS THE AGE OF THE EARTHENWARE CULTURE. VAST QUANTITIES OF EARTHENWARE WAS USED FOR COOKING AND SERVING FOOD



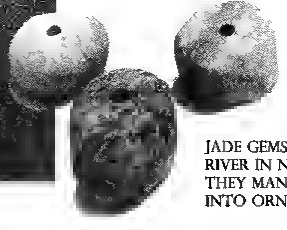
WALNUTS WERE COMMONLY EATEN AT THE TIME. THE ABUNDANT TREE NUTS PROVIDED BY THE MOUNTAIN'S BLESSING WERE A CRUCIAL SOURCE OF NUTRITION

THE PEOPLE MAY HAVE WORN CLOTHING THAT LOOKED LIKE THIS MADE OF CLOTH (RESTORATION)

A "JOMON POCKET" WOVEN FROM GRASS WAS FOUND WITH A WALNUT INSIDE



VAST QUANTITIES OF FISH AND ANIMAL BONES WERE UNEARTHED. PICTURED ARE MACKEREL BONES.



JADE GEMS FROM THE ITOI RIVER IN NIIGATA. WERE THEY MANUFACTURED INTO ORNAMENTS?

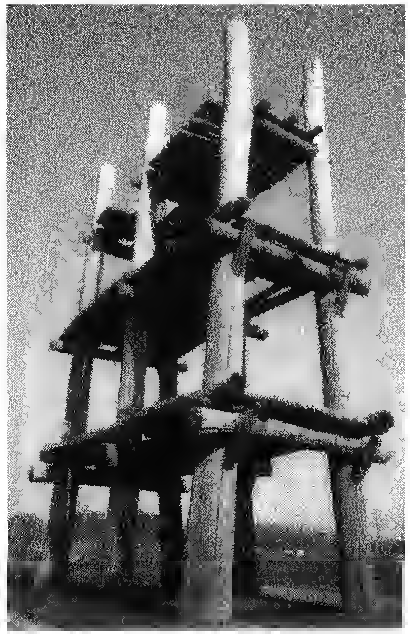
2. RICH AND DIVERSE FOOD AND CLOTHING

EATING HABITS AT THE TIME WERE DIVERSE. THE PEOPLE ATE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. THERE WAS ALSO AN ABUNDANCE OF PROTEIN SOURCES, INCLUDING MACKEREL, AMBERJACK, SALMON, SHELLFISH, AND SMALL ANIMALS. THERE ARE THEORIES THAT THEY USED THE FRUIT OF THE RED-BERRIED ELDER TREE TO MAKE LIQUOR. ACCORDING TO GENETIC ANALYSES OF POLLEN, THEY CULTIVATED PLANTS SUCH AS BEANS, BURDOCK, AND HEMP, AND ALSO RAISED A LARGE-SCALE CHESTNUT FOREST. THEY WERE NOT SIMPLY A HUNTER-GATHERER SOCIETY, AS THE COMMON THEORY CLAIMS. AS FOR CLOTHING, THEY USED NOT ONLY FURS BUT ALSO OFTEN USED CLOTHS, AND THEY ALSO WORE A VARIETY OF ORNAMENTS AND ACCESSORIES.

SIX CHESTNUT PILLAR HOLES 2 METERS IN DIAMETER AND DEPTH, WITH 4.2 METER INTERVALS. "LARGE SIX-PILLARED BUILDING" WAS RESTORED FROM THESE BASED ON BUILDING THEORY

RESTORED "PIT DWELLING". THE SANNAI-MARUYAMA SETTLEMENT SUDDENLY VANISHED 4000 YEARS AGO

ACCESS TO SANNAI-MARUYAMA RUINS
20 MINUTES BY CAR FROM JR AOMORI STATION, OR TAKE "SANNAI-MARUYAMA RUINS" BUS AND GET OFF AT "SANNAI-MARUYAMA RUINS" 30 MINUTES BY CAR FROM AOMORI AIRPORT, AND 5 MINUTES BY CAR FROM AOMORI INTERCHANGE ON TOHOKU THROUGH HIGHWAY. ASIDE FROM THE RUINS, YOU CAN VISIT THE "JOMON JIYUKAN" AND "EXHIBITION ROOM" ALL ARE OPEN YEAR-ROUND AND ADMISSION FREE. 305 AZA MARUYAMA, OAZA SANNAI, AOMORI CITY. TEL. # 017-766-8282 (JOMON JIYUKAN)



THE 17-METER TALL "LARGE SIX-PILLARED BUILDING" IS A SPECIAL HISTORICAL LANDMARK.

3. HIGH-LEVEL CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

THE BASIC RESIDENCE WAS A "PIT-DWELLING", WITH A FLOOR DUG IN TO THE GROUND AND A FIREPLACE IN THE CENTER. THESE HOUSED FOUR TO FIVE PEOPLE. IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT THEY USED PRECISE MEASUREMENTS, AND THE "LARGE DWELLINGS" OF TEN METERS OR LONGER ARE ALL CONSTRUCTED IN UNITS OF APPROXIMATELY 35CM. THEY POSSESSED HIGH-LEVEL TECHNOLOGY IN WOODWORKING, LACQUERWARE, AND EVEN ROAD-BUILDING, AND BUILT DUGOUT CANOES TO CONDUCT TRADE WITH DISTANT PLACES. LOCATIONS, SUCH AS DWELLINGS, GRAVES, STOREHOUSES, AND DUMP SITES WERE STRICTLY ALLOCATED, DEMONSTRATING TO US THAT THE SANNAI-MARUYAMA RUINS WERE A FULL-FLEDGED CITY.

INTERIOR OF A RESTORED "LARGE PIT-DWELLING" 32 METERS LONG.

"PILLAR-SUPPORTED BUILDINGS", RESTORED AS ABOVE-THE-GROUND STOREHOUSES.

時代と世代を越えて、いつも新鮮な名作群!!

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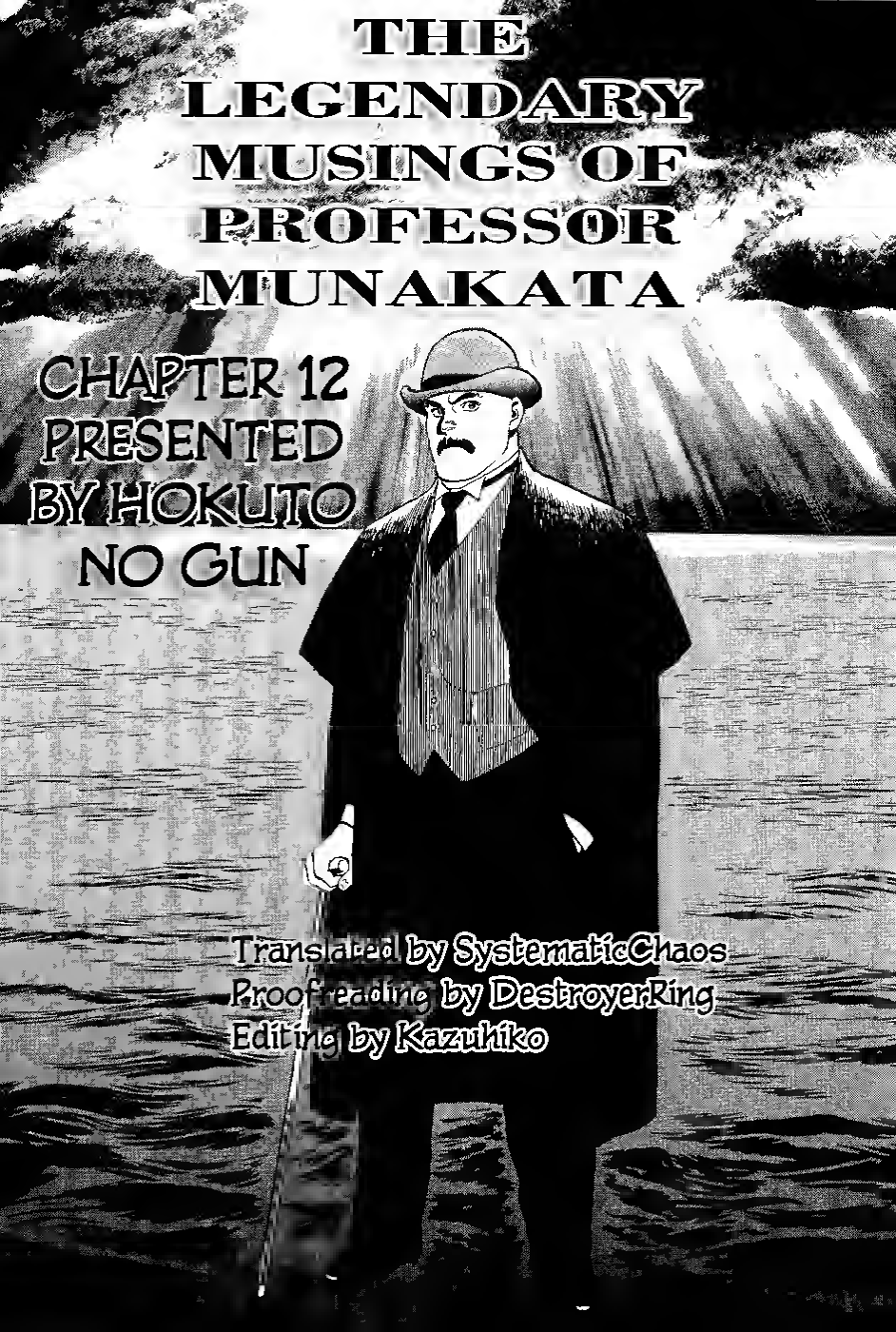
THE LEGENDARY MUSINGS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

CHAPTER 12

PRESENTED BY HOKUTO NO GUN



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